Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

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Master Thesis

Economic and Political Role of Turkey in the Middle East

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Thesis title

Economic and Political Role of Turkey in the Middle East

Objectives of thesis

The objective of this work is to analyze Turkey's economic and political role in the middle east. Turkey played an important role in the war that started in 2010 and still continues under the name of the Arab Spring. In addition, the result of the study will be revealed with its relationship with the political actors in that region. It will be aimed to evaluate the policies of the current government in this region according to the current conjuncture.
Objectives will be achieved by focusing on three main hypotheses.
1-Examine and evaluate Turkey's regional effectiveness in the Middle East
2-Turkey's role in the political crisis as a result of the Arab Spring events and their consequences
3-Examine the relations between Turkey and the regional political actors in the Middle East and their economic and political objectives.

Methodology

This thesis will cover both theoretical and practical part. Theoretical part will consist of theoretical background which will be based on scientific books and papers. Academic resources will be reviewed and theory behind will be explained. Practical analysis of the theory will consist of new outlets, most importantly government newspaper where all the laws are published, as part of the observation about the country. Using primary information sources from different backgrounds and professions will be collected by conducting online surveys.

Based on the results that will be gathered from theoretical and practical part of this work, hypotheses that were mentioned will be introduced

The proposed extent of the thesis

60 – 80 pages

Keywords

Economic and Political role, Turkey, Arab Spring, Political actors

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Recommended information sources

1- Turkey's Role in the Middle East: Historical and Geostrategic Context, Future role in the Middle East https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/pwks1.pdf

2- TURKEY'S CHANGING MIDDLE EAST POLICY, Middle East Technical University,Altunısık Benli Meliha, 2010 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267548801_Turkeys_Changing_Middle_East_Policy

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6- Interpreting Turkey's Middle East Policy in the Last Decade, Karacasulu, Nilufer, Dokuz Eylul University, 2015.

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my master thesis titled ***"Economic and Political Role of Turkey in the Middle East***" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on date of submission _____

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Economic and Political Role of Turkey in the Middle East

Abstract

This master's thesis explores Turkey's positioning in the Middle East from both political and economic perspectives. Examining various theories, the thesis elucidates how the Turkish government incorporates these frameworks into its foreign policy. It offers an in-depth analysis of post-Arab Spring events and Turkey's relationships with Middle Eastern countries. Additionally, the thesis underscores the economic ties through which the concept of Foreign Policy Choices (FPC) is operationalized by the Turkish government. The practical component involves the distribution of an online survey among the Turkish population to assess their perceptions and evaluations of Turkey's role in the Middle East.

Keywords: Economic and political role, Turkey, Arab Spring, Political actors

Hospodářská a politická role Turecka na Blízkém východě

Abstrakt

Tato magisterská práce se zabývá postavením Turecka na Blízkém východě z politického i ekonomického hlediska. Práce zkoumá různé teorie a objasňuje, jak turecká vláda tyto rámce začleňuje do své zahraniční politiky. Nabízí hloubkovou analýzu událostí po arabském jaru a vztahů Turecka se zeměmi Blízkého východu. Kromě toho práce zdůrazňuje ekonomické vazby, jejichž prostřednictvím turecká vláda operacionalizuje koncept Foreign Policy Choices (FPC). Praktická část zahrnuje distribuci online průzkumu mezi tureckou populací, jehož cílem je zjistit, jak vnímají a hodnotí roli Turecka na Blízkém východě.

Klíčová slova: Ekonomická a politická role, Turecko, arabské jaro, političtí aktéři

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1. Introduction

Turkey is an old civilization that maintains significant ties with the Middle East and Central Asia on a political, economic, and cultural level. The geographic position of Turkey at the crossroads of Europe and Asia gives the country an increased geostrategic significance in the area. Turkey is a regional power that has the capacity to influence global affairs as a result of its strong military, politically stable government, and rapidly expanding economy. In addition, the transformations that are taking place in the Middle East have displaced the established regional powers from their position of Arab leadership, making it possible for new regional and extra-regional powers to step in and fill the void that has been left. Turkey is one of these states, and because of its historical, spiritual, and cultural ties to the area, it dominates the dynamics of the region.

In the period after 2011 Turkey started to recognize far more dangers, and because of this a result revealed a greater willingness to employ armed forces to confront them, becoming a part of the region's polarization, both material and ideational.

Turkey continues to assert its position in the local circumstances in the Middle East by promoting the struggle of the Palestinians, attempting to mediate in the dispute over Iran's nuclear program, expressing its concerns across NATO's attacks against Libya, figuring out an answer to the conflict in Syria, and fighting the growing phenomenon of Islamic State (IS). As a result, Turkey will maintain its importance in the area even as the balance of power continues to move away from the Euro-Atlantic region and toward Asia. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether Turkey is capable of playing a leadership role in the Muslim world and striving to recreate the Ottoman Empire or if it is working to increase its power position over the Middle East in order to portray itself as an alternative model for the governments in the area.

Since May 2019, Turkey has participated in two military operations in the northern region of Iraq, and during the previous four years, Turkey has participated in four military actions throughout Syria. In addition to this, Turkey has entered into an agreement with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya that establishes maritime boundaries and a defense partnership. It is also engaged in intense competition with both the Iran-led axis

and the Saudi–United Arab Emirates (UAE) bloc, and it has played the balancing contest between its conventional US ally and Russia in Syria. All of this points to a significant shift in Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East.

2. Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The objective of this work is to analyze Turkey's economic and political role in the middle east. Turkey played an important role in the war that started in 2010 and still continues under the name of the Arab Spring. In addition, the result of the study will be revealed with its relationship with the political actors in that region. It will be aimed to evaluate the policies of the current government in this region according to the current conjuncture.

Objectives will be achieved by focusing on three main research questions:

- Examine and evaluate Turkey's regional effectiveness in the Middle East
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2.2 Methodology

This thesis will cover both theoretical and practical part. Theoretical part will consist of theoretical background which will be based on scientific books and papers. Academic resources will be reviewed and theory behind will be explained.

Practical analysis of the theory will consist of new outlets, most importantly government newspaper where all the laws are published, as part of the observation about the country. Using primary information sources from different backgrounds and professions will be collected by conducting online surveys. Based on the results that will be gathered from theoretical and practical part of this work, research questions that were mentioned will be introduced.

3. Theoretical concept

This particular chapter is focused on revealing some important factors and theories thar are vividly seen in the Turkish policy and its framework. The theory of “Strategic Depth Theory”, “The Ottoman Empire theory” and “Foreign Policy Change - FPC” are common to Turkish foreign policy (Yanik, 2011). However, it is directly related to the party which is responsible for such activities and steps. The following chapters describe the theoretical concepts that Turkish government tries to hold – on, the foreign policy it implements across Middle East.

3.1 Turkish concept of Foreign Policy

Depending on the circumstances, a state may play a variety of roles on the global or regional stage. A state's external function includes a variety of goals, one of which is to drastically change the current situation. It is possible for the state to take an ideological position and fight for its principles, or it may function as an example, building a model of internal growth that other world powers would want to follow. The state's objective in making these speeches is to gain influence on a global scale (Sadi, 2022:51). It is clear that the present Turkish administration is willing to state its all-encompassing strategic goal for the numerous regional domains surrounding Turkey, especially the Middle Eastern area, in relation to the Justice and Development government's view of Turkey's regional role in the Middle East. The equilibrium is important to the Turkish administration as they work toward a more conciliatory and balanced foreign policy.

According to Inaç and Ünal (2013), there are two main points to consider in this method. Firstly, it emphasizes the diplomatic, economic, and political interests of Turkey. Secondly, it rephrases and presents these objectives in a way that aligns together with the objectives of different regional powers and the whole regional system. Furthermore, this strategy includes endeavors to strengthen Turkey's autonomous regional perspective, allowing it to articulate its self-proclaimed objectives apart from its dependency on Western relations. At the same time, it seeks to avoid disagreements with American and other regional superpowers' plans, agendas, and objectives (Barkey, 2011:29).

In the same sense, Ibrahim Al-Bayoumi Ghaem* argues that Turkey's position in the Middle East is highly dependent on the country's assessment of its long-term goals and its engagement in the area. In light of the shifting obstacles affecting the area, this entails materializing this imagined function via the adoption of a number of policies, stances, and initiatives. This policy's apparent impact on the ground serves as a mirror for the larger strategic goal, making it a reality (Litim, 2010:64).

The founders of the Justice and Development Party argue that the coalition has embraced a new viewpoint in foreign policy, with the objective of positioning Turkey in an entirely novel position inside its regional context, but that is unique from the ones it has played in the past. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that this vision is not founded on dogma; rather, it is a practical and objective approach that is founded on significant strategic planning. A primary objective is to make the most of Turkey's strengths in order to achieve the desired results. Erdogan was quoted as saying that this perspective is marked by energy, dynamism, decisiveness, reasonable calculations, and a rely on pluralism. Erdogan underlined the need for change in a speech which he delivered on January 22, 2004, stating that such change is necessary to keep up with the ever-changing character of the globe. This highlights the fact that the current administration places a high priority on an innovative approach in foreign policy, with the intention of accelerating Turkey into the future and establishing its position as a strong global force (Mawad, 2015:67).

In a comparable context, Ahmet Davutoglu, a former minister of foreign affairs and an important promoter of the new Turkish view, argues that the following decade of the Second World War represented a missed chance for Turkey. There was a lack of a common objective in Turkey during this time period, and the country instead relied on a strategy of "reactions" or "crisis response." When this is taken into consideration, the Turkish perspective places an emphasis on the critical need of a foreign policy that is adapted to each area, with a particular focus on the incorporation of this policy with the specific characteristics of each region (Mawad, 2015:41).

Osman I was successful in establishing the Ottoman Empire during the latter decade of the 13th century. The Ottoman Empire went on to become one of the most powerful empires in world history. It was successful in establishing its dominance over broad portions of the

Middle East, North Africa, and a significant portion of Europe (Macfie, 1998). Osman I was the first Sultan to begin the lengthy line of rulers who would continue to reign over the empire for more than six hundred years after his death (Kent, 1996).

3.1.1 Theoretical principles of Turkey's new Foreign Policy

After coming into office in November 2002, the Justice and Development Party have been responsible for a significant change in Turkish foreign policy, throughout the region and on a worldwide scale. This change goes beyond simple or tactical modifications, impacting the basic foundations of the attempted methods. It has been recently observed that Turkish decision-makers have given high importance to the Middle East (Barkey, 2011:125).

To understand the new Turkish foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East, it is important to examine the approach taken by previous Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Davutoglu implemented a foreign policy that was both proactive and successful, based on two primary concepts: the approach of strategic comprehensiveness policy and the problem-minimization policy. Both of these tracks had been constructed. Davutoglu (2014:64) presents two significant political hypotheses, namely the strategic depth concept and the neo-Ottoman theory, which try to analyze the fundamental principles of foreign policy thought.

3.1.2 Strategic Depth Theory

This philosophy actively seeks to relegate stereotypical perceptions of Turkey's neighboring countries to the annals of history. It is underpinned by a geographical standpoint designed to eradicate the perceived isolation of Turkey's neighboring nations. The overarching goal of this ideological shift is to create conditions conducive to Turkey's renewed engagement in the Middle East. In challenging the assumption that Turkish foreign policy should be exclusively driven by concerns about internal security, it dismisses the notion that neighboring nations should be viewed merely as potential threats rather than opportunities. This transformation prompts a comprehensive reevaluation of the relationships between surrounding countries and others on the global stage.

In his acclaimed book, "Strategic Depth," Ahmet Davutoğlu provides a nuanced explanation of the concept advocating for Turkey to maintain a judicious distance from all states and organizations worldwide. According to Davutoglu (2014:54), he recommends steering clear

of regional alliances or axes to consistently remain equidistant from all parties. This approach not only helps assuage concerns held by regional and international players regarding Turkish policy but also underscores the importance of maintaining a balanced and impartial stance. For a more in-depth exploration of the theory's foundations and objectives, one can refer to (Davutoglu, 2014:63), a comprehensive work authored by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Davutoglu. This source delves deeper into the rationale behind the theory and elucidates its overarching goals, providing a more comprehensive understanding of Turkey's evolving foreign policy framework.

- The establishment of a balance between freedom and security, the guaranteeing and actualization of freedom for Turkish people, and the prevention of threats to Turkey's security as a potential consequence of this equilibrium.
- Instead of concentrating primarily on one area, Turkey should actively participate in all of the regions to which it considers itself to belong since this would be more beneficial.
- The adoption of proactive peace measures, which constitute a plan to handle difficulties before they become more serious.
- Attaining the principle of zero issues in the regional environment of Turkey, which represents the pursuit of a state of peaceful interactions that are free of disputes.

3.1.3 The New Ottoman Theory

Neo-Ottomanism is an idea that outlines a radical plan to restore order to Turkey. Its roots can be traced back to the 1980s, when Turgut Ozal was president of Turkey. Today, the Justice and Development Party, many civil society organizations, and a wide range of groups, such as scholars, and university teachers, strongly back this innovative approach. Neo-Ottomanism was first supported by a number of different social and political groups in Turkey at that time. It is based on three main ideas, the first of which is:

Neo-Ottomanism is the idea that Turkey should peacefully integrate its Islamic culture while highlighting its unique mixed and multiethnic Ottoman legacy. The second point is to relearn how great the Ottoman Empire was, which will boost pride and self-confidence in foreign policy, getting rid of any feelings of weakness or inferiority. The third part is about keeping the door open to the West while also building a good relationship with the Islamic East.

Neo-Ottomanism wants to bring back the focus on the principles of Turkish patriotism by supporting atheism, which means that the government should stay out of religion issues. This way of thinking wants to bring back the public sphere to society and let the government run it while keeping the lines of communication between the people and the government open. On the outside, it represents the current mix of soft and hard power, with both being used in balance to achieve the goals of Turkish foreign policy. This complex plan aims to make Turkey an active player on the world stage, building on its history while also responding to new problems.

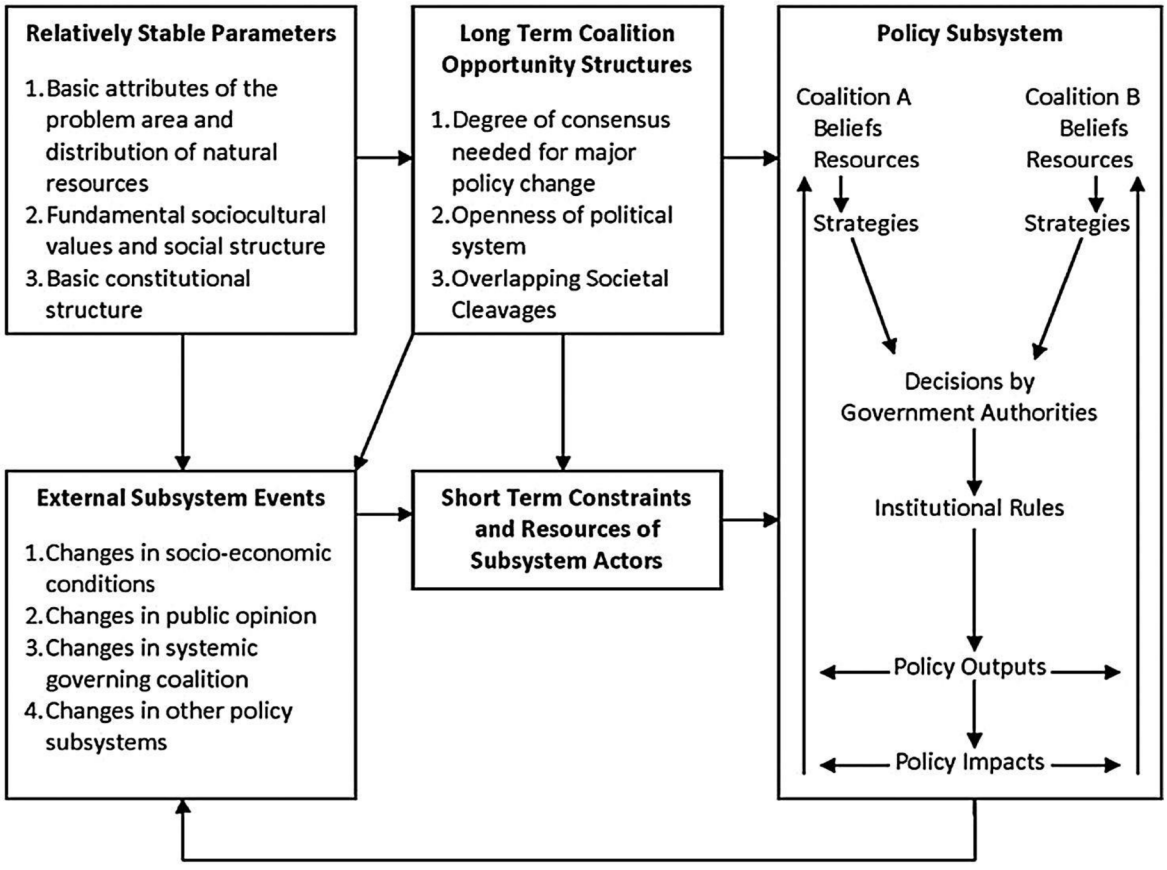
Ahmet Davutoglu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, provided an explanation of the fundamental nature of Neo - Ottomanism within the larger framework of the ideas that guide his nation's foreign policy, particularly with regard to the international arena and, more specifically, the Arab world. On February 2, 2009, he delivered a speech at the Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Al-Ahram, where he provided this clarification. Asserting that Turkey's strategic approach goes into actual depth by re-engaging with its surrounding world, Minister Davutoglu said that Turkey's strategy transcends political boundaries that had kept Arab and Islamic populations isolated for decades, both from the East and the West. According to Ganem (2009:17), he highlighted the necessity of admitting history as well as the unchangeable impact that location has on the patterns of sociopolitical situations.

3.1.4 Foreign Policy Choices and its context

The academic research on foreign policy change (FPC) posits that complete transformation in a nation's foreign policy is hardly and much more uncommon among authorities governed by the same political party (Volgy et el., 1994: 14). Therefore, the frequency and magnitude of the AKP's adjustments to foreign policy are very notable. The field of FPC has expanded significantly since the conclusion of the Cold War, but, a complete theoretical structure has not yet emerged. Ulrike & Bereswill (2021: 17-18) claimed however, there is an increasing agreement in the area that the examination of FPC necessitates focus on three distinct tiers of evaluation: the global level, the national level, and the level that involves individuals who make decisions. Hermann's (1990) groundbreaking research on FPC mainly employed this paradigm, with a strong emphasis on domestic and individual levels, but also acknowledging the external world as a catalyst for FPC. Gustavsson (1990: 7) subsequently developed a conceptual framework to clarify the phenomenon of FPC, which emphasized underlying

structural circumstances, political leaders' actions, and the occurrence of a crisis. There are noticeable changes happening in foreign policy despite the presence of a crisis, which is a cause for concern. Haar and Pierce (2021: 31) conducted recent research using the Advocacy Coalition Framework, see ***Figure – 1***, to elucidate the concept of FPC. Their concept extends beyond the governing body of a state and include organizational players, such as internal bureaucracy. There's a limited amount of debate on variables at the international level. Scholars primarily attribute the impact on Foreign Policy Change (FPC) to systemic circumstances and particular actions of external superpowers (Volgy et el., 1994: 14). These factors prompt leading nations to redefine their perception of security risks and provide them with more policy freedom within the system (Meliha & Lenore, 2011: 31). To summarize, the global landscape poses both obstacles and possibilities that might result in Foreign Policy Challenges (FPC).

Figure 1: Advocacy coalition framework



Source: Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014: 6)

3.2 Formation of Turkish Government

The Ottoman Empire, unlike so many others before it and after it, had both amazing peaks and dips throughout its history (Douglas, 2001). In the end, it fell apart due to the effects of World War I, resulting in a result, the Ottoman Empire gave rise to the formation of an entirely independent nation known as the Republic of Turkey (Lewis, 2002). New emissions had been produced as a result of the contemporary Turkey's emergence on the earth's surface. Mustafa Kemal was quick to institute significant political, social, and cultural changes once the Republic of Turkey was established shortly after his death.

The Democratic Party (DP), led by Celal Bayar, was officially registered in January 1946 (Erdemir, 2006). All four original members of the forming group, namely Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Refik Koraltan, and Professor Fuad Koprulu, had previously been affiliated with the Republican People's Party (RPP). The Democratic Party became victorious in the elections conducted on May 14, 1950. In the last election, the Democratic party secured a significant victory by winning 408 out of the 487 seats in the House. This outcome represents a notable increase in their representation, while the Republican party's seat count decreased from 390 to 69 compared to the previous Assembly. Celal Bayar assumed the position of the first civilian President of the Republic, while Adnan Menderes assumed the role of Prime Minister (Erdemir, 2006). In the subsequent elections held in 1957, the Democratic Party (DP) had a decline in voter support, receiving 48% of the total votes and securing 424 out of 610 seats. Conversely, the Republican People's Party (RPP) witnessed an increase in electoral success, garnering 41% of the votes compared to their previous share of 31%, resulting in the acquisition of 178 seats (Erdemir, 2006). By the beginning of 1958, the government had undergone a complete condition of isolation from almost all the institutions inside the state. The aforementioned circumstances resulted in a widespread dissatisfaction among the populace, ultimately culminating in the anticipated and apprehended occurrence of a military coup on May 27, 1960. Notably, this event was the first instance of such an upheaval in the annals of the Republic of Turkey (Kucukcan, 2003). Regrettably, the aforementioned military operations persisted into the 1990s. Further, the author breaks down the focus of AKP party by its ruling periods.

Prior to delving into the notion of the function and the AKP's view of the Turkish regional role, it is necessary to examine this political party. In August 2001, Recep Tayyip Erdogan,

the ex-mayor of Istanbul, applied for a license for his political party, which he named Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi. The majority of the party's founders were those who belonged to the Welfare Party, which was under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. After the dissolution of the Welfare Party, the conservatives, under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, and the reformists, headed by Abdullah Gul, continued to be part of the Virtue Party until it was also disbanded by a ruling from the Constitutional Court.

The party's symbol is a light bulb, designed in yellow, black, and orange. Akparti, often known as the "white party" in Turkish, is referred to by its followers. The name symbolizes innocence and purity (Ġnaç and Yacan, 2018:321). The party's program delineates internal goals, with a focus on achieving the sovereignty of the Turkish people, preserving the unity of the Turkish state, and protecting cultural values that are essential to the Turkish legacy. The objective is to create a modern society that follows Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's ideals, prioritizing the welfare, safety, and stability of the Turkish people, and developing a social system that promotes the desired societal standards. Furthermore, the objectives include the attainment of equity and equitable allocation of domestic earnings among Turkish citizens (Kawli, 2011:61). The external goals, as specified in its program, are elaborated by Celil (2001:89) are the following:

- The objective is to maintain and strengthen the political and economic cooperation between Turkey and its friendly and allied states, with a specific emphasis on strengthening relationships in fields like as economics, science, technology, investment, and commerce.
- Turkey places a high importance on its connections with Islamic nations and actively seeks to enhance collaboration between them. It also advocates for the transformation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference into a more active and influential organization, in order to secure a prominent international position.
- Enhancing Turkey's approach in the Balkans by using its historical, cultural, and economic affiliations with neighboring nations and adjusting these relationships as necessary.
- Devoting endeavors to augment the safeguarding of the rights of Turkish expatriates.
- Seeking partnership chances in the Caucasus area while surpassing the limitations imposed by traditions from the Cold War period.

- The Turkish foreign policy is focused on formulating a strategy that encompasses Euro-Asian elements, in addition to the conventional European and Atlantic aspects.

3.2.1 Focus of AKP party from 2002 – 2010.

Despite the assertion of originality, multiple foreign policies pursued by the AKP demonstrated a continuation of Turkey's established traditions, including active participation in the European Union (EU) accession process and a focus on fostering connections with NATO members. During its first phase, the AKP administration prioritized the objective of "Europeanisation" as its primary foreign policy priority (Onis & Yilmaz, 2009). The preceding coalition administration had already implemented some political and legal changes that were deemed essential for attaining European Union membership. The aforementioned measures included the elimination of capital punishment, the curtailment of police authority in regards to detainment, and the establishment of a fresh civil code with a specific focus on enhancing the rights to freedom of association and assembly. Consequently, the initiation of the accession process between the European Union and Turkey took place during the Helsinki Summit in 1999. The AKP administration expeditiously enacted pertinent legislation, which included measures such as constraining the military's influence within the National Security Council and implementing political and social changes, notably the augmentation of Kurdish language rights. The initiation of Turkey's accession discussions with the European Union began in 2005.

The AKP also endeavored to mend relations with the United States (US) which had become strained due to Turkey's decision to refrain from supporting the US invasion in Iraq in 2003. The coalition decided to assign the blame for this action mostly to "the old Turkey," namely its armed forces, despite the fact that several important members and lawmakers of the AKP were accountable for the parliament's inability to pass the bill endorsing the invasion (Erdemir, 2006). The AKP government effectively engaged with the post-9/11 regulations of the Bush administration by deploying non-combat forces to Afghanistan and expressing endorsement for the US policy of "forward strategy of freedom" in the Middle East. This policy sought to promote democratic development as a means to achieve peace in the area (Kılıç & Burhaneddin, 2023). By differentiating itself from the previous state of Turkey, the AKP was able to assert a perceived shift in its foreign policy and its emancipation from the

influence of the established powers (Worth, 2009). Consequently, it assumed the guise of novelty when presented to both internal and external audiences.

Nevertheless, in some regions, the foreign policy of the AKP started to deviate from the preceding Turkish foreign policy towards the end of the first term. Particularly during its second term in administration, beginning in 2007, the AKP shifted its attention towards cultivating stronger ties with the MENA region (Kılıç & Burhaneddin, 2023). Consequently, its efforts to reconcile its regional engagement with its contacts with Western nations diminished. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area, two significant transformations occurred. The first movement pertained to the broader area, while the subsequent shift specifically concerned Turkey's policies towards the recently formed Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The previous paradigm change became apparent when the AKP embraced a new policy known as ***"Zero problems with neighbors"***. In accordance with this strategy, the AKP made significant endeavors to transform Turkey's ties with Syria. These efforts aimed to shift the dynamics from a state of hostility, characterized by conflicts over water resources, territorial disputes, and the sheltering of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), towards a more peaceful and cooperative relationship. This transformation included the promotion of enhanced commerce, facilitation of visa-free travel, fostering military collaboration, and cultivating a sense of friendliness between the two nations.

Consequently, the bilateral ties between Turkey and Syria transcended the state of normalization and evolved into a kind of "strategic partnership" (Davutoglu, 2009). The aforementioned event was marked by the first visit of Bashar al-Assad, the President of Syria, to Turkey in January 2004. Subsequently, the establishment of a "High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" ensued (Arsu, 2009). In 2009, significant gatherings of the principal cabinet ministers were convened. The volume of commerce between Turkey and Syria had a substantial growth, rising from $1 billion in 2007 to above $4 billion in 2009 (Worth, 2009). Syria also engaged in collaborative efforts to repatriate PKK militants to Turkey (Worth, 2009). and notably, the two presidents and their respective spouses partook in joint leisure activities. Assad made a statement characterizing Turkey as Syria's most favorable ally, while Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed a sense of kinship towards Syrians (Phillips, 2009).

The AKP's new policies in the MENA region exhibited comparable changes, as shown by Saudi King Abdullah's first official journey to Turkey in four decades, which he described as a pivotal moment in enhancing the ties between Turkey and Saudi Arabia (Qusti & Ghazanfar, 2006). In the following two years, Turkey entered into a Memorandum of Understanding, so becoming the first strategic partner outside the Gulf region for the Gulf Cooperation Council (MFA, 2023: Özlem, 2019). Turkey has assumed the position of a mediator in several peace negotiations, including those involving Syria and Israel, Hamas and Fatah, and Iran and the international community (Bonab, 2009). In August 2010, Turkey made a public declaration about the establishment of a "Quadripartite High Level Cooperation Council" with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. The Council aimed to foster collaboration on shared issues within the framework of a durable strategic alliance, with the possibility of extending membership to additional nations considered to be fraternal. Turkey also attempted to expand its existing Free Trade Agreements with Syria and Jordan by attempting to conclude a new agreement with Lebanon, but without achieving the desired outcome. In March 2007, a more restricted Free Trade Agreement was ratified by Turkey and Egypt (USAID, 2007). The two governments had engaged in prolonged discussions about energy cooperation, however failed to reach a consensus. The AKP persistently engaged in ongoing negotiations. Similar to his approach with other nations in the Middle East, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (Bülent, 2009) in conjunction with the foreign minister of Egypt, expressed their commitment to establish a high-level strategic council aimed at enhancing political and commercial collaboration.

Evidently, Turkey's modification of domestic government has led to a growing inclination towards its Middle Eastern colleagues, with its continued engagement with Western nations (Worth, 2009). This strategic reorientation seeks to use Eastern alliances for both influence and trade, but not always garnering unanimous approval from Western partners. As an example, Turkey played a significant role in facilitating Syria's reintegration into the international community after its isolation enforced by France and the United States (Kılıç & Burhaneddin, 2023). This occurred at a period when these nations exerted pressure on Syria to remove its military forces from Lebanon subsequent to the tragic demise of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Turkey established a trilateral alliance with Syria and Iran in response to apprehensions on the future of Iraq subsequent to the United States' military intervention. The shift in aligning its foreign policy in the Middle East and North

Africa (MENA) area with that of the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) began towards the conclusion of the first century of the 2000s (Rahman, 2009). During this period, the AKP administration extended its engagement in the region while simultaneously augmenting its own independence. The changes in Turkey's policies towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, as well as the broader transformations in its foreign policy instruments, can be attributed to the influence of former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's soft power theories. One notable concept put forth by Davutoğlu is his theory of "rhythmic diplomacy," which he extensively discussed in his written works and public discusses, including his book titled "Stratejik Derinlik" (Strategic Depth) (Davutoğlu, 2008).

One significant alteration in Turkish foreign policy during the AKP era was to the enhancement of Ankara's diplomatic ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) starting in 2008 (Rahman, 2009). The conclusion of the Cold War facilitated the United States' military intervention in Iraq in 2003. The invasion posed a significant risk to Turkey since it had the potential to undermine Baghdad's authority over the majority of Kurdish-inhabited regions. Furthermore, it facilitated the rise of de facto governance by the Kurdish political factions and possible safe havens among the PKK, which the Turkish government saw as a significant threat to the safety of Turkey (Rahman, 2009: Kılıç & Burhaneddin, 2023). Following the overthrow of the Saddam dictatorship by the United States, the significant involvement of the Kurds in the establishment of a new Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) prompted some to anticipate the eventual emergence of an autonomous Kurdish nation. Hence, in light of Turkey's escalating incidence of PKK terrorist attacks and its limited progress in persuading the United States to address the PKK presence in Northern Iraq, the government led by President Erdoğan made direct efforts to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in order to mitigate cross-border assaults (Altunışık, 2015). The formal visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in October 2009 exemplified a shift in policy and facilitated the subsequent establishment of Turkey's consulate in Erbil in 2010 (Pusane, 2017). This action was of significant importance in attempting to address the issue often referred to as "The Kurdish problem." The use of the expression in a public manner by Prime Minister Erdoğan, while addressing the Kurdish population in 2005, was a novel occurrence for a leader in Turkey.

The changes in Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area during the early period of AKP governance may be better understood by examining variables at the domestic level (Altunışık, 2015). The aforementioned alterations were initiated subsequent to the rise of a novel political faction, with one of the primary determinants of this transition being the ideological standpoint of the AKP (Pusane, 2017). This perspective has historically expressed criticism towards Turkey's foreign policy posture, which has been regarded as passive and defensive since the establishment of the Republic. In the MENA area, leaders of the AKP said that the Republic had failed to fulfill its historical obligations and disregarded its cultural affinity with this region, alleging that it had disengaged from it.

Furthermore, alongside the prevailing ideology of the leadership and the political party, institutions and internal alliances also had influence. The AKP had strategically positioned itself as a political entity outside of the established power structures, and throughout its first years, it made concerted efforts to strengthen its position and exert influence over the state apparatus. In order to strengthen its authority, the political party used two primary tactics. Initially, the objective was to weaken the authority of the military, which had positioned itself as the protector of the Kemalist secular state. The AKP ultimately achieved this objective with the assistance of the United States and the European Union, who endorsed its efforts as a means of advancing democracy and as a component of the accession process. Additionally, the AKP established connections with various entities that had critical views of and experienced marginalization under the Kemalist rule. By forming an alliance with the liberal faction, the AKP gained access to intellectual resources that enabled them to effectively critique the governing system. Forming an alliance with the Gülen movement facilitated the acquisition of administrative members, while aligning with Kurdish nationalists earned more popular support. During the period from 2007 to 2011, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) pursued a strategy to address the Kurdish issue in Turkey by seeking to enhance its diplomatic ties with the Kurdish population in Iraq (Gönül, 2014). Therefore, the process of de-securitization played a pivotal role in Turkey's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) policy, particularly in relation to its policy towards the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). This was essential for the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to successfully attain its domestic goals. The process of de-securitization in Turkey's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) policy, particularly in its approach towards the

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), has not only contributed to the reduction of civil and military bureaucratic opposition to the Justice and Development Party (AKP), but has also facilitated the strengthening of the AKP's domestic and international alliances. Furthermore, it facilitated economic prospects for the AKP, which prioritized attaining economic prosperity as a fundamental element of its authority. The shift towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has presented favorable circumstances for Anatolian enterprises to thrive, therefore emerging as a key pillar of the AKP administration. Enhancing relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has served the dual objective of fostering improved diplomatic connections and facilitating Turkey's access to crucial energy resources, which are in high demand owing to its expanding economic development (Gönül, 2014). In summary, the AKP strategically used foreign policy as a means to shape its domestic policy in order to ensure its political longevity and achieve electoral triumphs.

The AKP has possibilities to alter its foreign policy because of factors not only at the national but also at the regional and international levels. After 9/11, the West looked to Turkey as a potential example of democracy in a Muslim country. The regional shifts that occurred after 2003 opened up new possibilities for Turkey as well. Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies were worried about the Shiite-led government in Baghdad and the "rise of Iran" in Iraq and regional politics more broadly, so they turned to Turkey as a counterweight to Iran. Similarly, once the EU membership process got underway, neighboring nations saw Turkey as a gateway to the West and worked to strengthen ties with it. At the same time, Ankara wanted to align its foreign policy with the EU's, thus it put an emphasis on soft power, economic integration, and conflict resolution in the Middle East and North Africa.

3.2.2 Focus of AKP party in 2010 – 2015

The second phase of foreign policy cooperation with respect to the Middle East and area transpires throughout the 2010s. Turkey's increased engagement in the area and less focus on demonstrating its significance to Western allies is seen in Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's characterization of Turkey as a "central state" (merkez ülke) (Davutoğlu, 2008). The aforementioned trend was also evident in the scholarly discourse about the extent to which Turkey's foreign policy was transitioning from a focus on Europeanization to the concept of "soft EuroAsianism (Onis, & Yilmaz, 2009). During the late 2000s, the Justice

and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey developed a concept of Turkey as a "central state," which resulted in a growing divergence between its Middle East policy and that of its Western allies. This divergence was particularly evident in its approach towards Israel, cooperation with Iran, and the strengthening of ties with Assad's government in Syria and the Bashir regime in Sudan. Therefore, in conjunction with Brazil, Turkey actively opposed the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929, which aimed to impose stricter sanctions on Iran in response to its nuclear program. Subsequent to the adoption of the resolution, the AKP administration contended that Ankara could only commit to adhering to the UN sanctions, while refraining from complying with the supplementary penalties imposed by the EU and US. This stance was justified by Ankara's ambition to enhance commercial relations with neighboring countries (Hürriyet Daily News, 2010). In 2009, the Prime Minister at the time, Erdoğan, extended a welcome to Sudan's leader, Omar al-Bashir, for a gathering of the Organization of Islamic Countries in Istanbul. This act of hospitality disregarded an arrest order issued by the International Criminal Court against al-Bashir. Erdoğan provided an account stating that during his journey to Darfur, he did not see any instances of genocide. He further expressed the belief that Muslims are incapable of perpetrating acts of genocide (Hürriyet Daily News, 2009).

In 2010, the diplomatic ties between Turkey and Israel saw a deterioration due to the involvement of Turkey's İnsani Yardım Vakfi (Humanitarian supplies Organization, İHH), an Islamic-oriented organization. İHH planned a convoy having the intention of delivering humanitarian supplies to the Palestinians residing in Gaza, who were subjected to an Israeli-imposed blockade. The administration of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) declined to halt the flotilla. When the Israeli authorities attempted to intercept the lead vessel, namely the Mavi Marmara, a violent confrontation erupted, resulting in the unfortunate loss of life of nine individuals who were part of the protest group on board. The prevalence of discourse critical of Israel saw an upsurge, leading to the decision by Ankara to recall the Turkish Ambassador from Israel. This event highlights the ongoing dispute about Hamas, which is classified as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, and the European Union. However, Turkey perceives Hamas as an Islamist organization associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which President Erdoğan views as a constructive force in the area and comparable to his own AKP party (Tavernise, 2010).

The Foreign Policy Conduct (FPC) of Turkey saw an increased amount of prominence during the period of 2010-11, mostly due to the occurrence of the Arab uprising. The AKP saw the transformations resulting from the Arab turmoil as a favorable circumstance to pursue a strategy aimed at establishing itself as a prominent regional force. Ankara has shifted its former approach of engaging with a wide range of actors and assuming the position of an impartial mediator in regional conflicts, opting instead for proactive engagement in the ongoing changes taking place in the Arab world. This phenomenon became notably apparent when Turkey extended its backing to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria, alongside its support for various other Islamist organizations in the neighboring country (Futák, & Hylke, 2022). Ankara shown early support for the pro-democracy factions in Cairo's Tahrir Square, advocating for the removal of the Mubarak dictatorship. Additionally, Ankara demonstrated significant backing for the newly established government led by Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. Ankara therefore expressed its disapproval of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's seizure of power from the Egyptian government subsequent to Morsi's assumption of office (Dombey, 2013). Moreover, Prime Minister Erdoğan initiated the use of the Rabaa (Rabia in Turkish) salute, consisting of four fingers raised, as a gesture of solidarity with former President Morsi, whose followers encountered severe aggression inside the premises of the Rabaa al-Adawiya mosque located in Cairo (Reuters, 2013). During his address at the United Nations, President Erdoğan criticized the Sisi administration and expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of objection from other UN members about the aforementioned government's acquisition.

In their efforts to establish a robust connection with the Assad administration, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu had made significant efforts. Not only did Turkey break with the Syrian dictatorship when Assad failed to adapt his reaction to the Syrian revolution as Ankara had advocated, but it also embraced a hardline government change strategy and permitted the rebel army to enjoy a safe haven on the frontier between Turkey and Syria (Özlem, 2019, p.31) Additionally, Ankara made it possible for foreign militants who were interested in joining the Syrian opposition troops to enter the Turkish border, and it also provided certain opposition organizations with weapons (Faysal and Stein, 2016). There is no question that Erdoğan had the belief believed Assad would collapse, just as Mubarak did, so creating an opportunity for Turkey to have greater power in Syria, where the Turkish government backed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood as a constituent of the Syrian opposition (Balci,

2012). According to an article written by (Birand, 2011) Syrian state-run media was making the accusation that Turkey had supplied the Syrian Muslim Brothers with weapons. He moved on to highlight out the fact that the Muslim Brothers were viewed by the Syrian government as a danger to the nation's security in the same way which Turkey saw the PKK as an imminent threat to the nation's security (Birand, 2011: 21).

3.2.3 Strategic autonomy of Turkey in 2016 – 2020

From 2016 onwards, a noticeable change in the AKP's Foreign Policy Community (FPC) toward the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region became apparent. Throughout this era, Turkey's diplomatic ties with nearly all Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, with the exception of Qatar, worsened, prompting the state to take a very aggressive approach in its international negotiations. Turkey's main focus was on the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed faction, the People's Protection Unit (YPG), which are both connected to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) (Faysal and Stein, 2016: 18). Those factions had acquired dominance over some regions in the northern portion of Syria, often known as Rojova. Ankara sought to hinder the merging of these regions in attempt to avoid the formation of a second autonomous Kurdish enclave next to its borders. This land would provide a secure refuge for the PKK and provide them the opportunity to get assistance (Özlem, 2019: 31). Turkey considers a Syrian Kurdish enclave associated with the PKK to be a greater security concern than the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), whose leaders cooperate with Ankara on economical and geopolitical issues. The Turkish government launched "Operation Euphrates Shield" in response to the PYD's attempts to establish a connection between the eastern and western parts of their occupied region.

The Turkish military's participation in Syria has significant consequences both inside the country and on an international scale. On the inside, the consequence is connected to the failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016. The AKP promptly carried out an armed operation in Syria after the unsuccessful coup attempt in order to reassure its supporters over the ongoing robustness of the Turkish armed forces. Furthermore, it facilitated the development of a nationalist storyline that the AKP and its partner, the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), employed all efforts to achieve victory in the referendum aimed at transitioning Turkey's constitution from a Parliamentary

mechanism to a strong presidential system—an important goal advocated by former Prime Minister Erdoğan (Siccardi, 2021: 17).

Internationally, Turkey's viewpoint on the threats presented by the Syrian civil war differed greatly from those of the United States and other neighboring countries, including as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Siccardi, 2021). These countries were particularly preoccupied with the escalation of Islamic State troops and allied Islamist movements. The YPG soldiers collaborated with the United States as their infantry units in the battle versus the Islamic State and in overseeing the custody of Islamic State combatants (Gulmez, 2020). Russia and Iran, backers of the Assad regime, also experienced apprehensions across the Islamic State. Nevertheless, Russia, exercised control over Syrian airspace, granted permission for Turkey to engage in military operations, therefore enhancing diplomatic ties.

The AKP administration expresses dissatisfaction with the U.S. decision to provide training and resources to the PYD/YPG in their efforts to combat the Islamic State (Gulmez, 2020). Their perception of the issue stems from the fact that it bolsters Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria and presents a risk to Turkey's security and territorial integrity.

Confronted alongside the actuality of Russia's active military involvement in Syria during the summer of 2015 and failing to convince America to reduce its backing of the PYD/YPG, the AKP administration progressively collaborated with the Russian force in Syria. Ankara's reconciliation with Russia enabled it to initiate a second military campaign against the PYD/YPG in northeastern Syria in 2018, followed by a third military operation in 2019, which was approved by Washington (Siccardi, 2021: Gulmez, 2020). Turkey and Russia have reached an agreement to establish a de-escalation zone in Idlib, which will be overseen by Turkey via the supervision of 12 observation posts. Turkey, together with Russia and Iran, participated in the establishment of the Astana process, which serves as an alternative to the Western-led Geneva process aimed at resolving the Syrian domestic conflict (Gulmez, 2020). Within the framework of the Astana process, Ankara's objective aimed to effectively handle its ties with Syria and actively pursue a diplomatic resolution to the war, therefore consolidating Turkey's position as a more influential participant in the Syrian crisis.

Under the Foreign Policy Cooperation initiative, Turkey significantly increased its engagement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area, particularly in the context of the Syrian involvement (Debre, 2020). Turkey adopted a more assertive position towards Egypt and Israel. Furthermore, it escalated its engagement in the Persian Gulf and embraced a more assertive stance towards foreign policy in Libya.

In the Gulf region, Turkey provided assistance to Qatar by augmenting its military installation in the area and lending backing to initiatives aimed at countering the embargo enforced by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In 2019, the AKP government responded to an offensive by Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army on the UN-supported authority in Tripoli by undertaking diplomatic and military measures in Libya(Siccardi, 2021: Gulmez, 2020). Benefiting from the assistance of the United Arab Emirates, Haftar's military forces were on the verge of seizing control of Tripoli. However, Turkey interfered by deploying its own armed troops and using Syrian mercenaries to thwart this advancement.

Consequently, after this intervention, the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya entered into an agreement with Turkey on an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Mediterranean. This arrangement allows for access to oil and gas resources. In response to the expulsion of Haftar's troops from Tripoli and encountering obstacles, Turkey has made the decision to prolong its military deployment until 2020. Turkey defended this move by asserting that it was necessary, not only for its own security, but also for the overall stability of the area, in order to confront insurgent groups in Libya. The declaration explicitly referred to Turkey's interests in the "Mediterranean basin and North Africa (Debre, 2020).

The affiliation of the AKP with the Muslim Brotherhood and other associated groups had an impact on Turkey's choices about its foreign policy as well as its military engagement in Libya, Qatar, and Syria. Qatar and Libya both provided financial assistance to Turkey, which resulted in economic benefits for the country (Siccardi, 2021). Through the use of foreign direct investments and currency swaps, Qatar was able to contribute to the growth of Turkey's economy.

As a result of the Libyan Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Turkey gained access to the energy resources of the Mediterranean. This resulted in direct rivalry with Greece and

other members of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, which included Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine (Pusane, 2017). Turkey was not included in this forum. Turkey's activities during this time period significantly strained relations with Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia (Futák & Hylke, 2022). These countries saw Turkey's backing for the Muslim Brotherhood as a possible danger for their own governments, and as a result, their relationships with Ankara became more complicated.

Changes in the worldwide and local scene, which encouraged a reconsideration regarding military threats, difficulties, and the appearance of new possibilities, may be partly interpreted as the cause of the events that took place in Turkey's Foreign Policy Community (FPC) during 2015-2016 (Hamad, 2022). This emerging international system was characterized by a number of distinguishing characteristics, including the spread of multipolarity and the decreasing impact of the West in the area. This change in the global system has resulted in an increase in the number of alternatives available to middle powers like Turkey, as well as an improvement in their capacity to modify their foreign policy. As a consequence of this, Ankara's tendency toward assertiveness has increased as a result of the awareness of a growing international system.

The Foreign Policy Community (FPC) can be traced back to domestic politics, where substantial changes occurred in both the political coalitions of the AKP and the decision-making process for foreign policy. Despite this, the fundamental driving factor behind the FPC can be traced back to domestic politics. After a failed effort to overthrow the government in July 2016, Erdoğan formed a coalition with nationalists, including the MHP, to establish the National Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı), which is a new political entity (Hamad, 2022). This partnership was the impetus for a general change toward nationalist attitudes in foreign policy, including the prioritization of military tactics to handle the Kurdish problem, both inside Turkey and across the wider region, by increasing the amount of effort that is being put out against the PKK (Hamad, 2022).

This nationalist foreign policy was able to be implemented with less scrutiny from the legislative and bureaucratic branches of government as a result of the construction of a presidential system similar to that of Turkey (Haesebrouck & Joly,2021), particularly after the attempted presidential coup. This adds credence to the idea that is presented in the current

body of research, which states that centrist regimes are better suited to handle changes in foreign policy.

3.2.4 Reset of relations with Middle East countries (2021-2022)

The Middle East area saw a significant change in Turkey's foreign policy beginning in the year 2021. Ankara started on measures to restore its relations with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel, which signified a break from the previously tense relations that existed between the two countries. At first, Turkey's primary emphasis was on focusing on reconciling with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country that the AKP government and President Erdoğan had previously accused of aiding the unsuccessful attempt to organize a coup.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched a $10 billion fund to encourage investments in Turkey during a visit to Turkey by Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed in November 2021. This visit marked the beginning of the normalization process. Furthermore, on President Erdoğan's return visit in February 2022, thirteen additional agreements pertaining to military, commerce, and technology were inked between the two countries (Hamad, 2022, p.15). When President Erdoğan publicly charged Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman of coordinating the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident, at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018, the AKP government expressed its desire to improve relationships with Saudi Arabia. This commitment came shortly after the AKP expressed its desire to normalize relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

When the AKP Justice Minister agrees to postpone the prosecution of 26 Saudi nationals who are suspected of being involved in the murders, the chances for normalization have strengthened. The claim that Riyadh's unwillingness to extraditeo them constituted a barrier to the prosecution was the basis for the decision that was made. A series of meetings between Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Salman and President Erdoğan were made possible as a result of this decision. These trips were accompanied by the easing of an undeclared Saudi ban on specific categories of Turkish imports. In addition, the Saudi capital of Riyadh deposited five billion dollars in the Central Bank of Turkey.

As a result of an unexpected turn of events, Turkey's relationship with Israel underwent a full and total makeover. The process of normalization began in 2022 with a state visit by Israeli President Herzog to Turkey. It came to a close with the reciprocal appointment of ambassadors, which marked the end of a gap that had lasted for four years. The decision to restore relations with Israel seems to have been significantly influenced by Ankara's efforts to garner support from the pro-Israel lobby in the United States. The meeting between President Erdoğan and the President of the World Jewish Congress took place in September 2022, when President Erdoğan was in New York for the annual assembly of the United Nations General Assembly. Furthermore, President Erdoğan participated in separate meetings with leaders of several Jewish organizations, stating his desire to visit Israel, as reported by a Turkish newspaper that is associated with the administration. Additionally, the AKP was able to enjoy domestic benefits as a result of the normalization of ties. These benefits included the strengthening of economic linkages, the growth in tourism, and most importantly, the possibility of natural gas being transferred from Israel via Turkey.

The declaration made by the AKP, which expressed desire in restoring ties with the administration of Assad, was a major step toward normalization. Following the conclusion of further intelligence-level conversations with Syria, a very significant cabinet conference was place in Moscow in December 2022 (Franceso, 2021: 11). This meeting was attended by defense ministers from both nations. There is no doubt that the AKP intends to go on with these kinds of events in the year 2023. This Foreign Policy Choice (FPC) addresses topics that are of the utmost significance to the Turkish public and incorporates significant domestic elements. First, there is the issue of the significant number of Syrian refugees now residing in Turkey, which has been the subject of criticism from opposition parties and has contributed to the development of anti-refugee attitudes (Guardian, 2022). Through the use of FPC, the AKP intends to communicate its active commitment to finding a solution to the problem of refugees. Concerns have been raised about the possibility of a Kurdish entity in northern Syria establishing its own autonomous government. This is the second problem. This subject was addressed by Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who emphasized the need of having a strong administration in Syria in order to avoid the fragmentation of the nation. In addition to this, the AKP has been making efforts to normalize ties with an Egyptian government. Recent advances have occurred, led by the decision of the AKP to ban Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood broadcasts in Turkey, aligning

with Egyptian demands, and converging interests in Libya. This is despite the fact that the process is progressing more gradually than it is with other Middle Eastern countries.

One might make the case in which the AKP's attempts to normalize relations in the Middle East area do not signify a complete shift in the party's foreign policy. It is a common practice to make use of firearms and to engage in nationalistic conversation. Turkey continues to be very heavily engaged in Libya, both economically and militarily, and this strategy is connected to Turkey's goals in the eastern Mediterranean region, namely with regard to Cyprus, oil reserves, and its maritime borders. In addition to this, Ankara is providing training for Libyan aviation and exporting aircraft to the Libyan National Government. A continuation of Turkey's military participation in Syria is additionally taking place. It is still necessary to provide a justification for the most recent series of normalizations.

The AKP's current focus on the area appears to be driven by a significant motivation originating from the domestic sphere, also known namely the AKP's goal of ensuring its political existence. Similar to the first years of the AKP, it seems that Turkey's renewed attempts to strengthen its connections with the Middle East are driven by significant commercial and economic factors. In light of the upcoming 2023 elections and the persistently high inflation rate in Turkey, averaging over 73% in 2022, President Erdoğan recognized the necessity to enhance investments in the country. This strategic move aimed to strengthen the country's finances and attract speculative capital, with the ultimate goal of regaining the trust of former AKP members who had defected from the party. Consequently, he initiated a deliberate campaign to win over the area by attempting to develop amicable ties with nations that he had previously criticized and weakened for almost a decade. His objective was to create a favorable environment that would promote commerce and investment, all while preparing for the next elections.

3.2.5 Summary of Turkish Foreign Policy

Over the last two decades, Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area has seen substantial transformations. This article highlighted four distinct phases of shifts that happened within the framework of evolving local, regional, and worldwide transitions. The research illustrates that modifications occur due to the interplay of local, regional, and international level factors, rather than favoring one level over the

others. During the initial period from 2002 to 2010, the AKP, a newly established political organization, pursued a strategy of actively involving itself in the MENA region as part of its domestic political program. This approach was facilitated by international and regional circumstances at the time, particularly the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the war in Iraq in 2003, which created a favorable environment for the AKP to expand its presence in the region. In the second phase, from 2011 to 2015, the AKP successfully strengthened its internal authority while also experiencing the Arab Uprisings, a huge regional change, which in turn influenced a notable alteration in its foreign policy. During the third phase, which spanned from 2016 to 2020, the National Alliance emerged and a presidential rule characterized by strong personalization took hold after a failed coup attempt. This was influenced by the changing dynamics of the region's politics after the perceived and actual withdrawal of the US from the area, as well as the rise of a multipolar global order. Ultimately, the FPC in 2021 mostly sprang from the AKP and President Erdoğan's electoral survival desires, as well as Turkey's growing isolation in the Middle East region. The policy adjustments were facilitated by the changing regional circumstances, which also prompted other parties to be willing to reconcile with Turkey.

3.3 Middle East, is that even a political term?

The phrase "Middle East" lacks objective qualities in terms of geographical description, unlike the terms "Central Asia," "Western Europe," or "North Africa" (Delanty, 2013). Hence, the comprehensive definition of this concept necessitates the consideration of various geo-cultural, geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geostrategic methods or viewpoints. The phrase "Middle East" lacks a singular paradigm and instead adheres to many meanings that are contingent upon diverse perspectives and circumstances (Kılıç & Burhaneddin, 2023). The categorization of this eastern area, whether as an eastern region itself or as an intermediate or proximate region, is subject to variation depending on the perspective of the entity responsible for such classification. Hence, the designation "West Asia or North Africa" is seen as an impartial and broad geographical delineation, but the word Middle East lacks an objective connotation for individuals in China or India, since this area is situated in the western direction from their respective vantage points.

The terminology used by Western policy theorists and policymakers has been developed in a subjective manner, as shown by their use and the chronological order in which they have emerged. This indicates a reliance on subjective perspectives (Ġnaç and Erdoğan, 2006). Furthermore, the emergence of the phrase "Middle East" as a political designation may be attributed to the delineation of a geo-cultural boundary that encompasses a unique cultural heritage, rather than being only determined by the goal of the physical geography of the area (Ġnaç, 2018). The term "Middle East" was initially coined by the geopolitician Mahan to refer to the area situated between the Arabian Peninsula and India. This region holds significant importance in terms of maritime strategy (Kılıç & Burhaneddin, 2023). It is important to note that the current definition of the Middle East, with the Persian Gulf as its focal point, is primarily based on strategic considerations rather than natural boundaries. The term became widely recognized following its usage in the phrase "the leadership of the Middle East" during the First World War, serving as a strategic adjective (Lewis, 1994). Hence, the definition of this word may be situated within the biocultural, geopolitical, geostrategic, and geoeconomic frameworks, and the politics of the Middle East include these multifaceted attributes.

The establishment of the geo-cultural framework for the Middle East is intrinsically linked to the historical development of its cultural heritage. Since the advent of written language

and the commencement of recorded history, the geographical area often referred to as the Middle East has been widely acknowledged as the birthplace of several ancient civilizations. Moreover, it has served as a significant crossroads where diverse civilizations from various parts of the globe have converged and interacted. The significance of the area as a worldwide point of interaction is recognized not only in terms of the exchange of economic products between the Eastern and Western hemispheres, but also in terms of the transmission of traditions, cultures, and civilizations (Haviland, 2002).

The Middle East has emerged as a location of significant historical advances and transformations due to its involvement in a method of multi-directional trade (Davutoglu, 2014: Haviland, 2002). It is worth noting that the Industrial Revolution, the bulk of which occurred outside of the Middle East, stands as an exception to this trend. Hence, the strategic influence over the Middle East region has emerged as an imperative objective for every nation aspiring to establish global dominance. The aforementioned imperative led to compelled population movements, both in the form of forced migrations and as a consequence of conflicts, both of a military and ideological nature. These events engendered many advancements and alterations, which had far-reaching effects not only on global historical and diplomatic dynamics, but also on the cultural fabric of the communities within the area. Hence, the Middle East area has seen the emergence of a complex and multi-faceted changing framework throughout time. This structure has been shaped by a combination of internal advances and foreign activities, leading to a mutually influential relationship between the two (Davutoglu, 2014).

The cultural variety of Anatolia has persisted since the 11th century, when the Seljuks established their rule in the area, subsequently leading to the arrival of the Crusades in reaction to this invasion. The Middle East had a distinctive characteristic, serving not only as a sphere of political impact and transcontinental transmission (Ġnaç and Sada, 2021), but additionally as a geo-cultural conduit connecting the East and the West. The aforementioned characteristic had an impact on the use of the designation "Middle East" by strategists, thus resulting in modifications to the geographical regions included by this terminology in alignment with global trends. For instance, the hegemony of Islamic civilization throughout the whole of the present-day Middle East region facilitated the process of geographically integrating the area, hence fostering cultural integration as well (Yiğit et al., 2007). Since

ancient times, the Middle East has been widely recognized as a significant region where Islamic civilization has exerted its influence. Consequently, the perception and definition of the Middle East have evolved in accordance with the historical fluctuations in the extent of Islamic dominance in this area, whether it during periods of growth or collapse (Davutoğlu, 2014).

The use of this terminology, together with its historical allusions, demonstrates the interconnectedness between the geo-cultural framework and the geopolitical framework of the given location. Davison (1960) did an extensive investigation into the notion of the Middle East, thoroughly examining several definitions associated with this area from the early 1900s. As a result of his analysis, Davison ultimately defined the Middle East as a geographical entity centered on the Islamic faith. The notion of the Middle East is influenced by a mix of geo-cultural and geopolitical variables, as shown in the definitions provided by Hogarth and Churchill. These definitions primarily focus on the regions that were once under the control of the Ottoman Empire during the early 20th century, including Albania and the Balkans. In line with Davison's perspective, Ponds (1963) also recognized two fundamental factors characterizing the Middle East: the cohesive force derived from the Islamic religion and the shared historical legacy inherited from the Ottoman Empire.

3.3.1 Middle East and its security issues

Various security complexities possess divergent objectives when it comes to the inquiry of how a specific regional security complexity is constituted. Buzan and Weaver (2003) have described the security complex in the Middle East as a state of continuous conflict creation. According to Coşkun, the area might also be referred to as a "conflict-driven complex." The user's text is too short to be rewritten in an academic manner. The Middle East serves as an illustrative case within the framework of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), whereby the process of decolonization has resulted in the emergence of conflicts. The region has persisted as an area characterized by ongoing violence and instability, thereby necessitating the ongoing development of a regional security framework. The user's text is too short to be rewritten in an academic manner. According to Mohammad Ayoob, the Middle East area is characterized by a negative security dependence, where interactions are mostly driven by hostile ventures and hostility dominates the whole system. The user's text is too short to be rewritten in an academic manner. The scope of regional security regimes

remained restricted, and the capacity of external players to establish a regional security framework was hindered by the intricate nature of intra-regional relationships.

When examining the Middle Eastern security complex, it is crucial to consider several factors such as historical dynamics, religious influences, ethnic dynamics, and the significance of natural resources. Additionally, the internal hierarchy of power, local political and ideological conflicts, as well as the objectives of major global powers, all contribute as significant elements in this context. The notion of hostility, as opposed to friendship, has more persuasive power in the area, given that each crisis encompasses a range of issues spanning from local to regional to global in nature. The complexity of the international security complex is exacerbated by the growing number of players and elements that contribute to the strategic assessments within the regional security environment. Hence, Turkey occupies a geographically intricate area, which may be characterized as multifaceted in several aspects. In this context, the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) serves as a significant framework for comprehending Turkey's position within the intricate dynamics of the region. The next chapter discusses about Turkey’s initial position about the Arab Spring.

3.4 The Arab Spring and Turkey’s initial response

The Arab world is now undergoing a transition that is unprecedented in its scope. On the one hand, the Arab uprisings made it abundantly evident that the current status quo cannot be maintained for an extended period of time. On the other hand, the continuation of these advances is doubtful, at least for the time being, in a great number of locations.

Turkey's foreign policy in the area has been presented with substantial challenges as a result of the changes that have taken place in the Arab world. Over the course of the last several years, Turkey established a foreign policy that is fairly active in the area, and as a result, it has made investments in the Middle East, both economically and politically. This meant that Turkey had, in a sense, made an investment in maintaining its status quo. The establishment of deeper contacts with the regimes was the first step in the process of developing increasingly closer relationships with the area. Turkey's reaction to the upheavals was complicated by the fact that the country's political, security, and economic links with the nations in the area were becoming stronger. The comparatively late reaction and careful

attitude that Turkey has shown toward the Arab Spring may be attributed to these restrictions. In general, Turkey is worried about the lack of stability in the area, which would also put its interests at jeopardy. The Turkish capital of Ankara seems to be particularly concerned about nations in which Turkey has maintained a significant presence. The situation in Libya served to illustrate these contrasting ideas. Both as a source of crude oil and for the building contracts that Turkish enterprises have secured in Libya, which totaled around 20 billion USD, Libya has been an economically significant country for Turkey.

Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, expressed a perspective that can be summarized as follows: ***"Any military intervention by NATO in Libya or any other nation would be highly counterproductive... Historical instances have demonstrated that external interventions, especially military actions, often exacerbate the existing problems"*** (Aras, 2011).

This stance could be influenced by the fact that, at that time, more than 25,000 Turkish workers resided in Libya, with a majority engaged in the construction sector.

When it came to Egypt, Turkey's stance was more constant, and Erdoğan was among the first foreign figures to advocate for the removal of President Husni Mubarak from the presidency. It is important to note that whilst it may be seen as a brave step, it is important to emphasize that ties among Ankara and Cairo were difficult under the administration of Mubarak and Erdoğan. This was primarily due to Turkey's expanding influence in the Middle East and the nation's criticism of Egypt's policies towards Gaza (Salem, 2010). President Abdullah Gul of Turkey traveled to Egypt with the intention of showing sympathy to the Egyptian people (Jung, 2011: 4). This visit took place barely a month after Mubarak was overthrown as the leader of Egypt.

Turkey had significant obstacles as a result of the events unfolding in Syria. In recent years, Syria has served as a notable illustration of Turkey's Zero Problems policy towards its neighboring countries. Nevertheless, similar to the alteration in Turkish policy toward Libya, Turkey too underwent a shift in its attitude to Syrian policies. Despite the first attempts, which included phone conversations between Erdoğan and Bashar al-Assad where Erdoğan urged substantial changes during the early protests, the relationship between the two leaders

deteriorated significantly. Turkey emerged as a prominent advocate for Assad's resignation. Davutoğlu expressed his opinion on this change in strategy, remarking, "Our intention was for [al-Assad] to emulate Gorbachev's leadership in Syria, but instead he opted for a Milosevic-like approach" (Hurriyet Daily News, 2012). Despite the fact that the crisis in Syria started in March, it was not until November that Erdoğan openly implored Assad to resign, adding, "By all means, whom are you fighting war with, for the sake of God?" Engaging in combat against fellow citizens until one's death does not constitute heroism. It is an act of shame. If one wants to see an individual who engages in a relentless struggle against his own population till their extinction, one should direct their attention towards Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, and Benito Mussolini. This statement was reported by REUTERS on November 22, 2011.

Although Turkey sometimes mentioned the possibility of military participation in Syria and expressed readiness for any situation, it did not show strong enthusiasm for the proposed plan of action. Turkey required a considerable amount of time to follow through on its threats against Assad and implement sanctions upon Syria. Turkey discreetly followed suit in imposing sanctions on Syria, only after the Arab League had made the decision to do so in late November. The statement made clear that the sanctions were not intended to harm the Syrian population and that essential resources such as water and power were exempt from sanctions (Jung, 2011: 5).

Turkey has expressed concern about the demonstrations in Bahrain because they fear it might lead to a direct confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, highlighting the division between the Shiite and Sunni communities. Turkey is dedicated to reducing the importance of this separation and, throughout the crisis, Davutoğlu endeavored to encourage discussions and created communication lines with Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Erdoğan voiced apprehension on the happenings in Bahrain, emphasizing Turkey's intention to prevent a repetition of the lamentable Battle of Karbala from the 7th century. The conflict led to the death of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad, the revered prophet who established Islam (Aras, 2011). This ancient battle is largely acknowledged as a crucial element that has contributed significantly to the persistent separation between Shiites and Sunnis.

In September 2011, Erdoğan began trips to Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, where he received a warm welcome and created much early enthusiasm in these countries. Erdoğan's diplomatic tour, known as the "Arab Spring Tour," demonstrated Turkey's strategic use of its soft power and growing economic might. In late December 2011, Turkey and Egypt conducted a significant joint naval drill called the "Sea of Friendship" (Telhami, 2011: 4). Turkey's state-owned export credit agency pledged to provide loans up to $750 million in January 2012 with the specific objective of rebuilding in Tunisia and Libya (Aras, 2011).

3.5 The Arab spring and Turkish Foreign Relations in Middle East

Examining Turkey's diplomatic ties with nations experiencing political change is essential. However, it is as important to investigate how the Arab Spring, namely the adoption of popular empowerment, is impacting Turkey's engagements with other international players. The Arab Spring, while not always the main factor, often enhances existing conflicts or shared interests in contemporary interactions due to its revolutionary nature. The primary emphasis of this debate will be Turkey's diplomatic connections with Middle Eastern countries, followed by an examination of its engagements with other global entities.

3.5.1 The Arab Spring and Turkish-Iranian Relations

The Arab Spring has strained Turkish-Iranian relations, which were already marked by underlying tensions (Lindenstrauss and Guzansky, 2011). Previous to the Arab Spring, Turkey's Zero Problems policy, coupled with its increasing energy needs and Iran's international sanctions, had fostered a degree of closeness between the two nations. However, the dynamics shifted with the Arab Spring.

One major point of contention between Turkey and Iran is their differing stances on Syria. While Syria holds significant importance as one of Iran's closest allies, Turkey has strongly condemned Assad's brutal suppression of opposition forces. Turkey's imposition of sanctions on Syria only came after the Arab League's decision, and there is reluctance toward military involvement. This variance in perspective might have prevented Turkey from directly intervening in the Syrian conflict.

The Iranian perspective on Turkey's emphasis on people's power is a cause for concern, particularly as some Iranians believe that the Arab Spring originated in Iran in 2009 with the

failed Green Revolution. The competition between the Turkish and Iranian models, with the Turkish Model gaining popularity, has intensified the rivalry between the two governments.

The problems between Turkey and Iran, especially when it comes to Syria, are made worse by Iran's nuclear program and the rising pressures in the area that come with it. Turkey has started trying further to be a go-between for Iran and the West, stressing how terrible it would be to attack Iran militarily. Turkey is very worried about the rising gap between Shiite and Sunni Muslims and the problems that could happen if Iran gets nuclear weapons, especially in states where Sunnis are the majority. Sunni-Shiite tensions should not lead to a Cold War, according to the Turkish Foreign Minister. He said that the effects could last for decades (Bayram, 2012). Some of these worries would still be there even if there wasn't an Arab Spring, but the fast-changing strategic situation has made it seem like things are even more unstable.

3.5.2 The Arab Spring and Turkish-Saudi Relations

Relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia have been complicated in the past, and they haven't reached their full potential. Even though Saudi Arabia wasn't happy with Turkey's support for the Arab Spring movements in general, the two countries agreed on one thing: Syria. The events in Syria are seen by the Saudis as a chance to weaken Iran's power. Turkey, on the other hand, has attacked the Assad government for violently putting down the protest. The effects of the U.S. pulling out of Iraq and the progress made by Iran in its nuclear program have brought Turkey and Saudi Arabia closer together. Even though this relationship may have grown without the Arab Spring events, they have made Turkey and Saudi Arabia more conscious of their common goals, which has led to a greater comprehension than before.

Because Iran has said it will cut off energy supplies, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have been talking about the possibility of selling oil at a lower price. This would make sure that there is enough oil in case Iran follows through on its threat to stop oil exports. This is very important for Turkey because it gets 51% of its oil from Iran (The Guardian, 2012). Saudi Arabia thinks that investments in Arab Spring countries are riskier, whereas the rapid growth of the Turkish economy makes it a more appealing place for Saudi investments (Zara, 2011). Rising economic solidarity between these two countries may make it easier for them to work

together politically, nevertheless problems from the past could stop them from fully aligning. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are both worried about Iran's closeness to nuclear weapons, but the Saudis think it's a bigger security risk. Turkey has also tried to work things out diplomatically with Iran, while Saudi Arabia has taken a more hostile approach.

3.5.3 The Arab Spring and Turkish-Iraqi Relations

The significant factors influencing the relationship between Turkey and Iraq stem from the aftermath of the 2003 Gulf War, particularly the events following the U.S. withdrawal in 2011. Additionally, the Arab Spring has compounded challenges for Turkey along its southern borders. The neighboring countries, Iraq and Syria, face the risk of disintegration, posing a direct threat to Turkey. The destabilization of Iraq and Syria carries potential adverse consequences for Turkey, including the influx of refugees and exacerbation of the Kurdish issue within Turkey. Furthermore, Turkey's economic interactions with Middle Eastern nations have relied, to some extent, on the ease of transporting goods through Syria and Iraq. The escalating instability in these countries and the potential need to find alternative routes may result in increased costs, posing greater challenges for Turkey to manage effectively (Barkey, 2011: 22).

This development has emerged in the aftermath of the U.S. removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. Previously, it might have been deemed implausible to anticipate a degree of cooperation between Turkey and the Kurds in Northern Iraq. Turkey, to some extent, has managed to counterbalance the growing influence of Iran in Iraqi affairs by fostering strong relations with the Kurdish Regional Government (Barkey, 2011: 46). An illustrative instance is the issuance of an arrest warrant in December 2011 against Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, considered the most influential Sunni leader in Iraq (Aras, 2012). This event led to significant tensions between Turkey and Iraq. The move against the vice presidency is seen as indicative of Iranian sway over Nouri al-Maliki, the Shiite Prime Minister of Iraq. Turkey expresses its disapproval of what it perceives as Maliki's regional policies.

A pivotal shift has occurred with the dismantling of Saddam Hussein's tyranny by the United States. What was once deemed implausible—the partnership between Turkey and the Kurds in Northern Iraq—has become a tangible reality. Turkey, in successfully countering the growing influence of Iran in Iraqi politics, has strategically cultivated robust connections

with the Kurdish Regional Government (Barkey, 2011: 46). An illustrative instance is the issuance of an arrest warrant in December 2011 against Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, a prominent Sunni official in Iraq (Aras, 2012). This particular incident heightened tensions between Turkey and Iraq. The move against the vice presidency is interpreted as a manifestation of Iranian influence over Nouri al-Maliki, the Shiite Prime Minister of Iraq. Turkey has been vocal in expressing its criticism of what it perceives as Maliki's actions toward the region.

Because Iraq has been going through significant transformations since 2003, the Arab Spring did not have a direct influence on the nation. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the Arab Spring, Iraq is struggling with a widening gap between Shiite and Sunni Muslims, which is having an effect on the country. As a result of the events that have transpired in Syria and the alteration of the dynamics of Iran's cooperation with Syria, there is also the possibility that Iraq may become more significant to Iran.

3.5.4 The Arab Spring and Turkish-Israeli Relations

The decline of Turkish-Israeli ties began before to the Arab Spring and has since accelerated, notably after the Flotilla Affair in May 2010, which represented the first open confrontation between Israel and Turkey. Although there were chances for enhanced relations during the Arab Spring, such as Turkey's decision to distance itself from Syria and expand its connections with the U.S., and its original readiness to seek a settlement before the leaked Palmer Report, no deal was ultimately found to end the Flotilla Affair. This highlights the presence of substantial disdain and rivalry in both nations. The Turkish populace is perplexed by Israel's hesitance to offer an apology for the fatal measures taken against Turkish citizens. Israel views Turkey's intentional focus on anti-Israel speech and activities as a strategic move to enhance its position in the area. Erdogan had frequently underscored that Turkey's concern is with the Israeli government, rather than the Israeli populace (Aras, 2012). It is important to mention that the Israeli public opinion has also changed dramatically against Turkey, as shown by the noticeable decrease in the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey (Baev, 2011).

The Arab Spring and Turkey's earlier endorsement of "People's power" intensified anti-Israel sentiments across the Arab and Muslim worlds, creating challenges for Israel. In line with

the broader Turkish public sentiment, Turkey's foreign policy toward Israel leaned pro-Palestinian. While not a new stance, these perspectives gained prominence in dealings with Israel (Benli, 2010). It could be argued that Turkey's robust support for the Palestinian cause marked its initial foray into embracing people's power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey emphasized the pivotal role of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue for ensuring regional stability. President Gül contended in a New York Times op-ed that the outcome of the preceding wave of unrest in the Arab world, whether it led to increased democracy and peace or the emergence of dictatorial regimes and conflict, depended on progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Despite the ongoing challenges that Turkey and Israel have with their neighboring countries, these issues provide an opportunity for the two nations to further their cooperation. Historically, both strains in Turkish-Syrian ties and the worsening of the internal conflict involving the Kurds have fostered a tighter relationship between Turkey and Israel. Both states are mutually interested in preserving a certain level of functional linkages. The outcome of whether Israel and Turkey can successfully resolve the present issue remains uncertain. However, the Israeli side has already experienced significant adverse consequences resulting from the worsening of ties.

3.5.5 The Arab Spring and Turkey's Relations with the Hamas and the Palestinian Authority

While the recent series of revolts in Arab countries did not lead to a Palestinian Spring, it did result in noteworthy advancements inside the Palestinian context. Turkey provided significant support to the Palestinian quest for membership in the United Nations. During a meeting at the Arab League in September 2011, Erdoğan said, ***"It is now appropriate to raise the Palestinian flag at the United Nations."*** As reported by BBCNEWS on September 13 of 2011, the initiative sought to hoist the Palestinian flag as a symbol of peace and justice in the Middle East. Davutoğlu clearly expressed his conviction that both the U.S. veto on recognizing Palestine and the Russian veto on Syria were ill-advised.

The electoral triumphs of political organizations associated with the Muslim Brotherhood ideology in nations experiencing political transformations have bolstered the impression of Hamas as a respectable body for engaging in discussions. The Turkish government has

repeatedly endorsed this perspective. During a televised interview in May 2011, Erdoğan clearly expressed his stance that he does not classify Hamas as a terrorist organization. According to a report by TURKISH NEWS on May 13, 2011, Erdoğan described Hamas as a political entity. Turkey views it as a notable error that several influential foreign players have chosen not to participate in public discussions with Hamas (Aras, 11).

At the same time as the Arab Spring, Fatah and Hamas have become more friendly with each other. Turkish officials were happy with the unity deal that Egypt helped Fatah and Hamas come to. Erdogan praised this change, saying it was important for peace in the Middle East (Turkish News, 2011). In June 2011, Davutoğlu said that Turkey would back the reunion (Setatimes, 2011), and he went to Egypt to personally witness the signing of the unity deal. Egypt took the lead in both the unity deal and the Shalit deal to free the trapped Israeli soldier. This may have caused some sadness in Turkey, but leaders from both Hamas and Fatah stressed how important Turkey was in making these deals possible.

Among its many interactions with peers in the Middle East, Turkey has the highest level of ease in its dealings with the Palestinians. The reason for this is dual: firstly, resisting Israeli occupation serves as a common goal that brings together people in the Muslim world. Secondly, the Palestinians have shown a comparatively higher inclination towards democracy, especially when compared to other Arab governments prior to the Arab Spring.

Turkey experiences the highest level of ease in its interactions with Palestinians among its various engagements with Middle Eastern peers. This can be attributed to two primary factors. Firstly, a shared objective of opposing Israeli occupation creates a unifying goal among people in the Muslim world. Secondly, the Palestinians have demonstrated a relatively stronger commitment to democracy, particularly when contrasted with other Arab governments preceding the Arab Spring.

3.5.6 The Arab Spring and Turkish-Jordanian Relations

Despite expectations of Arab Spring-like uprisings, Jordan remained remarkably tranquil. The ongoing developments in the Arab Spring have demonstrated that monarchic governments exhibit more stability in comparison to other authoritarian regimes. Saudi Arabia aims to bolster the monarchical systems in the area by proposing the inclusion of

Jordan and Morocco into the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). While this would strengthen Saudi Arabia's control over Jordan, Turkey has also enhanced its diplomatic ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the past decades.

The Jordanian economy has experienced adverse effects due to the repercussions of the Arab Spring, primarily as a result of the destabilizing influence of the ongoing conflicts in Egypt and Syria on Jordan. One of the consequences has been a decline in the number of visitors participating in cooperative tourism programs in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan (Dede, 2011). While Turkey is unlikely to rival Saudi Arabia when it comes to of economic assistance provided to Jordan, it may nonetheless persist in its efforts to promote bilateral and regional trading.

Jordan has endeavored to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as a means to alleviate insecurity in the monarchy. Although the parties engaged in direct negotiations for the first time in 15 months, little progress was made as a consequence (Tocci, 2012). Turkey considers the advancement of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to be very significant, hence any effort to relaunch negotiations would likely be seen favorably by them.

Nevertheless, Turkey wants to participate in these conversations, but the current condition of ties between Turkey and Israel prevents this. Although Turkey and Jordan now maintain favorable diplomatic ties, there are potential worries over their future relationship. Turkey, known for its support of the Palestinian cause, would likely struggle to stay apathetic if the Palestinians in Jordan choose to openly confront the Hashemite administration.

3.5.7 Recapitulation of Turkey's Foreign Policy Post-Arab Spring

Turkey's adoption of people power was perceived as an evolution stemming from its recent focus on enhancing Turkish soft power. In the preceding years, the nation endeavored to exploit the popularity of the Turkish Model in the Arab World to champion specific policies. However, the straightforward applicability of this model to the Arab Spring Countries proved more complex than initially assumed, exposing contradictions in its appealing aspects.

This emphasis on people's power reflected a values-based prism within a foreign policy that remained inherently pragmatic. The imperative to address the growing needs of the Turkish economy and escalating tensions in the Middle East had influenced this approach. Contradictions in implementing this policy were not novel and had existed in previous Turkish policies. The uprisings and their regional impact had necessitated a period of reorganization, inherently sensitive and potentially marked by increased violence and economic slowdown. Consequently, a more cautious and defensive Turkish foreign policy might have been required, contrary to the leaders' aspirations.

Paradoxically, despite Turkey's then-current stress on supporting people's power and discussions on the relevance of the Turkish Model to the Arab Spring Countries, indicating a continued emphasis on soft power, the nation had reverted in the previous year to wielding hard power. This was exemplified by heightened Turkish naval activity in the Eastern Mediterranean, posing a clear threat to Israel and Cyprus.

Some argued that Turkey faced challenges from the outset in promoting a soft power policy in a region where hard power prevailed. Additionally, the nation had a strong tradition of emphasizing hard power politics that proved challenging to break away from. The critical question about the future hinged on the outcomes of the Arab Spring revolutions. Dealing with states where the revolution led to a definitive result, like Tunisia, was expected to be more straightforward. If more states were to adopt some degree of the democratic model, Turkey's emphasis on people's power could have been visionary. However, if the revolutions failed and new autocratic regimes emerged, the relevance of Turkey's soft power initiatives would have become uncertain, potentially prompting a return to previous policies of silence regarding cooperating regimes.

The region's potential for new rounds of revolts would have added complexity to building a structured Turkish foreign policy, raising questions about the nature of Turkish action in the face of evolving circumstances.

4. Analytical part

The chapter is focused on analyzing economic relations of Turkey with the Arab countries. The significant changes that have taken place in Turkey's diplomatic relationships after the events in Syria that included Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar have had an effect on the country's bilateral economic connections with each of these countries. Within the context of four economic indicators—namely, tourism, foreign investment, purchases of Turkish real estate, and bilateral trade—this section provides an analysis of the influence that occurs. In these oil-rich nations, whose governments control huge economic resources and have long utilized their wealth as weapons of diplomatic power, the importance of economic connections to diplomatic ties is not something that comes as a surprise: these nations are oil-rich. Consequently, someone would anticipate a reduction in Turkey's economic connections with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while at the same time, someone might anticipate a strengthening of relations with Qatar since the turmoil.

4.1 Bilateral trade with Arab countries

The development of investment, trade, and exports was the highest importance of the AKP government's foreign policy during its first decade of governance (2002–2012). Turkey has been carrying out liberal focused on exports economic changes because the middle of the eighteenth century with the intention of creating a market that is profitable and focused on exports. Turkey has additionally taken efforts to settle its security and diplomatic difficulties with its Arab neighbors, and when it comes to Arab nations, it provides a particular emphasis to states that are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Consequently, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) area was aimed at as a top priority for the development of commercial connections. Among the nations that make up the GCC, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were considered to be the most significant due to the much bigger size of their economies in contrast to those of other countries.

Table 1 shows the total amount of trade that Turkey conducted with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates between the years 2002 and 2021. A significant growth in Turkey's commercial contacts after the year 2002 is shown by the export and import numbers. Additionally, the figures demonstrate the effect that the Qatar issue has had on

Turkey's bilateral commerce with each of these three nations. One can witness, as was anticipated, a rise in the quantity of goods that Turkey sells to Qatar in both 2017 and 2018, notably in 2018. Soon after the announcement of the financial embargo, Turkey took the initiative to supply Qatar with alternatives for a wide variety of commodities, mainly agricultural commodities like as dairy products and poultry, which Qatar had previously bought from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Table 1: Bilateral trade with Arab countries, in millions of USD

Turkey's Exports to	**2002**	**2010**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Qatar	$ 15	$ 163	$ 423	$ 439	$ 649	$ 1 097	$ 1 201	$ 1 504	$ 1 602
Saudi Arabia	$ 547	$ 2 218	$ 3 473	$ 3 172	$ 2 735	$ 2 636	$ 2 455	$ 2 791	$ 2 941
United Stated of Emirates	$ 452	$ 3 333	$ 4 741	$ 5 401	$ 9 124	$ 3 134	$ 3 314	$ 3 741	$ 3 612
Turkey's Imports to	**2002**	**2010**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Qatar	$ 11	$ 177	$ 361	$ 271	$ 264	$ 335	$ 415	$ 516	$ 612
Saudi Arabia	$ 788	$ 1 381	$ 2 117	$ 1 835	$ 2 110	$ 2 318	$ 3 144	$ 3 512	$ 3 516
United Stated of Emirates	$ 100	$ 698	$ 2 008	$ 37 001	$ 5 542	$ 3 741	$ 3 841	$ 4 122	$ 4 004
Balance ot Trade	**2002**	**2010**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Qatar	$ 4	$ -14	$ 62	$ 168	$ 385	$ 762	$ 786	$ 988	$ 990
Saudi Arabia	$ -241	$ 837	$ 1 356	$ 1 337	$ 625	$ 318	$ -689	$ -721	$ -575
United Stated of Emirates	$ 352	$ 2 635	$ 2 733	$ -31 600	$ 3 582	$ -607	$ -527	$ -381	$ -392

Source: Çağlayan (2019)

In the years after 2017, Turkey's commerce with the United Arab Emirates had a significant downturn, with sales falling by 66% and imports falling by 32%. Considering that the United Arab Emirates was Turkey's most important trading partner in 2017, these decreases were significant for Turkey. It came as a surprise that the effect on Turkey's commerce with Saudi Arabia was far less significant. Table 1 demonstrates that the value of Turkey's exports to Saudi Arabia has been on a downward trend since 2015. The percentage reduction in 2018 (3.6%) was much lower than the fall in 2017 (13.8%), which was a significant decrease. What is perhaps more remarkable is the fact that Turkey's imports from Saudi Arabia did not decrease during the crisis in Qatar but rather increased by 9.9%, reaching a total of $2.3 billion in 2018. Despite the fact that relations among the two countries have been on the rise in 2018, the results indicate that the bilateral commerce between them has shown a surprising resilience. It is additionally perplexing that dispute resolution had a much different impact on Turkey's commerce with Saudi Arabia compared to how they impacted trade with the United Arab Emirates. However, after 2018 and during the covid – 19, the Qatar and Turkey relations got more stronger from the economic perspective as seen in the balance of trade and from Turkey’s perspective, the balance always surpluses.

4.2 Foreign Investment and Business Relations

Since the year 2002, Turkey has made a concerted effort to strengthen its diplomatic and economic relations with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The continuation of this pledge comes despite the fact that Turkey already engages in significant commerce with both countries. The last several years have seen the emergence of options for mutual investment, which have proven to be appealing and rewarding for all parties involved. Both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have, throughout their histories and even now, maintained business environments that are open and appealing in order to attract foreign money. At the same time, a boom in the real estate market and significant government investments in domestic infrastructure projects in these nations have created lucrative investment opportunities for investors from other countries.

Over the course of the last several decades, Turkey has implemented policies that are favorable to business and has eagerly welcomed international investment across a wide range of economic sectors. The nation was only able to obtain a total of fifteen billion dollars in foreign direct investment (FDI) during the years 1973 and 2002. However, this number skyrocketed to a staggering $193 billion between the years 2003 and 2017. The states that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) had a major role throughout this time period, providing 9.4% of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) (Zaman, 2019). As a result of their considerable oil earnings and sophisticated financial institutions, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, together with other nations that are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have emerged as key suppliers of financial capital and foreign direct investment on a worldwide scale. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that following the year 2002, these nations showed a significant growth in their investments in Turkey.

Table 2: Foreign Direct Investments in millions of USD

Turkey's Exports to	2000	2003	2007	2011	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Qatar	$ -	$ 2	$ -	$ 59	$ 778	$ 715	$ 4 941	$ 5 522	$ 6 262
Annual Change		-	-100%	-	1219%	-8%	591%	12%	13%
Saudi Arabia	$ 193	$ 346	$ 1 248	$ 1 123	$ 1 811	$ 1 239	$ 994	$ 891	$ 625
Annual Change		79%	261%	-10%	61%	-32%	-20%	-10%	-30%
United Stated of Emirates	$ 1	$ 4	$ 6	$ 7 223	$ 6 847	$ 4 573	$ 3 585	$ 4 079	$ 2 997
Annual Change		300%	57%	114751%	-5%	-33%	-22%	14%	-27%
	2000	2003	2007	2011	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total GCC	$ 297	$ 716	$ 9 318	$ 9 785	$ 12 346	$ 8 649	$ 11 563	$ 13 015	$ 11 576
Total World	$ 18 812	$ 30 595	$ 151 929	$ 130 912	$ 174 802	$ 147 587	$ 136 435	$ 176 708	$ 127 821
Annual change						-15,6%	-7,6%	29,5%	-27,7%

Source: Çağlayan (2019)

In order to properly analyze the shifts that occurred in the asset holdings of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Turkey following the crisis in Qatar, it is necessary to take into consideration Turkey's financial crisis in 2018, which had a detrimental effect on international investment in the country. A financial panic occurred in August of that year, which resulted in a significant depreciation of the Turkish lira. This panic was triggered by global worries over Turkey's foreign debt, as well as escalating tensions among the United States and Turkey (Zaman, 2019). It is possible that this abrupt depreciation is somewhat to blame for the decrease in the value of foreign investments when assessed in terms of the United States dollar. In 2018, the entire value of worldwide equity stakes in Turkey dropped by 28%, from $176.7 billion in 2017 to $127.8 billion in 2018. This decline was a direct consequence of the crisis that occurred in 2018.

Given the magnitude of this fall, the decreases of thirty percent and twenty-seven percent in the value of Saudi and United Arab Emirates assets in Turkey are only marginally more than the decrease in the total amount of money that the whole globe has invested in the nation. As a result, the reductions in value are unrelated to the diplomatic problems that those nations have with Turkey (Zaman, 2019). If the situation in Qatar hadn't had any major negative influence on these nations' investments in Turkey in 2018, one would have seen bigger drops in the prices of their assets in compared to the average cost of assets throughout the world.

However, Qatar's foreign direct investment (FDI) in Turkey has greatly increased, and this upswing may be related with the good political characteristics that were mentioned before. According to the data shown in Table 2, Qatar's foreign direct investment (FDI) in Turkey had a rise in value in the year 2016. It is quite probable that Qatar's efforts to support

the Turkish economy in the wake of the attempted military coup that took place in June of 2016 are the cause of this rise. Taking this into consideration, Qatar was able to reverse a portion of the decline in investments from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, reaching a total of $6.3 billion in 2018, surpassing the even higher levels recorded in 2017. A further piece of evidence that demonstrates the durability of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates' business links with Turkey is the fact that both nations have direct investments in Turkey from their respective countries.

4.2.1 Real estate acquisition in Turkey by other countries

Prior to May 2012, there were several limitations imposed on foreign people regarding the acquisition of real estate in Turkey. These regulations included a reciprocity rule for real estate ownership and a land size restriction of 2.5 hectares (equivalent to 6.2 acres). In 2012, modifications were made to Turkey's foreign investment regulations, which removed the need for reciprocity and increased the maximum land size from 2.5 to 60 hectares (148 acres) (Zaman, 2019). The aforementioned alterations resulted in a significant increase in Arab (mostly GCC) fascination in both residential and commercial properties in Turkey.

In 2017, Turkey enacted a legislation granting foreigners the opportunity to get citizenship by investing at least of US$1 million in Turkish real estate. However, in September 2018, this minimum investment requirement was reduced to US$250,000. The decline occurred one month subsequent to Turkey's banking and currency crisis in August 2018, during which the Turkish government was making vigorous efforts to entice international investment. Furthermore, a non-native individual who lacked enthusiasm for acquiring complete citizenship privileges was permitted to acquire Turkish residence by purchasing a real estate property of lesser worth (Ramani, 2019). The aforementioned advancements have also heightened the curiosity of all citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), especially those from Saudi Arabia, in Turkey's real estate sector.

An analysis of Turkey's economic situation in its dealings with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as compared to its relations with Qatar, demonstrates that the enhanced economic involvement with Qatar has mitigated some of the losses incurred in its relationships with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. However, given the relatively lower size of Qatar's economy compared to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, it would be

impossible to anticipate a total offset. Nevertheless, the surprising durability of business connections between Turkey and Saudi Arabia has helped to ease the economic pressure caused by Turkey's continuous diplomatic disputes with Saudi Arabia since 2017.

Table 3:Purchase or real estate units in Turkey by Middle East countries

Purchases of Real Estate Units by Foreign Nationals in Turkey (2015 - 2019).					
Country	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
Egypt	318	348	587	725	780
Iran	744	664	792	3652	4158
Iraq	4228	3036	3805	8025	6124
Jordan	243	345	483	1362	1284
Lebanon	-	-	-	468	554
Libya	484	-	-	-	879
Palestine	-	-	337	655	-
Yemen	231	-	390	855	1214
Kuwait	2130	1744	1697	2199	1621
Share of total %	9,30%	9,50%	7,50%	5,50%	4,40%
Qatar	277	256	305	764	591
Share of total %	1,20%	1,40%	1,40%	1,90%	1,60%
Saudi Arabia	2707	1886	3346	2715	1856
Share of total %	11,80%	10,30%	14,90%	6,70%	5%
United Arab Emirates	332	192	402	-	-
Share of total %	1,40%	1,00%	1,80%	-	-

Source: Çağlayan (2019)

Table 3 illustrates a significant fall in the number of Saudi real estate acquisitions in Turkey, dropping from 3,345 units in 2017 to 2,718 units in 2018, representing a loss of 19%. Conversely, we see a 30% surge in purchasing made by citizens of Kuwait over the same timeframe (Al – Monitor, 2019). These data provide additional evidence that the difference in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia's interest in Turkish real estate assets can be primarily attributed to political and diplomatic factors, which have negatively impacted Saudi relations with Turkey. This disparity is despite the strong correlation between the oil revenues of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Qatar's real estate acquisitions increased by 150% to a total of 764 units

in 2018, as anticipated. It is important to mention that both the Turkish government and the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates did not make substantial measures to hinder these real estate transactions.

According to the information that is shown in the last column of Table 3, the Saudi Arabian portion of the total purchases made by foreign organizations fell to 5.0% during the first ten months of 2019, which is a significant decrease from the 6.8% that was recorded in 2018. While everything is going on, Saudi Arabia has purchased 1,840 apartments during this time period, which indicates that the market for Turkish property has demonstrated some resiliency considering the fact that the Saudi government has been running an unfavorable propaganda. The Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry given an alert to Saudi residents in May 2019 to encourage them to avoid investing in Turkey (Aktüel, 2019). The alert was made by officials from the Saudi government. In relation to real estate deals, they said that they had received multiple complaints from Saudi investors regarding the fraudulent activities and extortion carried out by Turkish authorities. In addition to this, they said that some Saudi nationals who had acquired property in Turkey weren't permitted to visit their real estate.

Additionally, in July of 2019, Saudi media outlets began a campaign with the intention of discouraging Saudi tourists from traveling to Turkey."12" In support of their claims, they referenced several warnings sent by the Saudi embassy in Ankara on the growing dangers of theft and criminal activity for Saudi visitors (Saudi Gazette, 2019). It is possible that these travel alerts had a negative impact on Saudi demand for Turkish real estate. This is due to the fact that one of the primary reasons Saudi nationals buy properties in Turkey is to utilize them as vacation rentals during the summer months. These aggressive actions taken by the Saudi government could therefore represent early indications of a new policy on the part of the Saudi government to proactively prevent its nationals as well as private-sector companies from investing in and engaging in commerce with Turkey.

4.3 Survey analysis

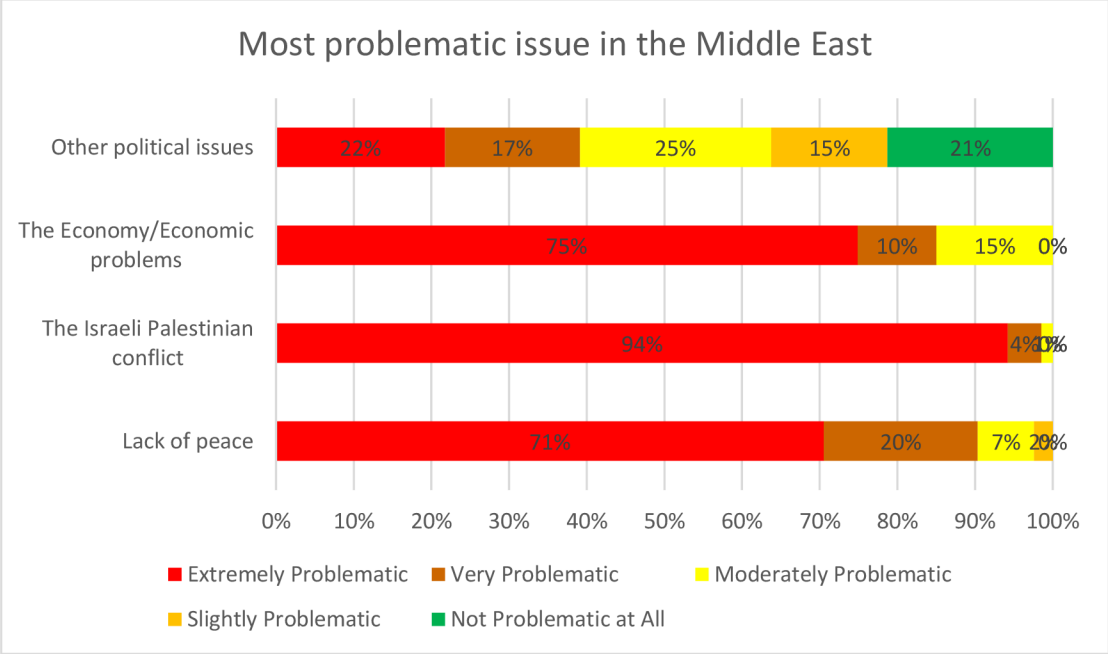
Additionally, the author applied the survey adopted from the Gůndogar and Akgůn (2011) which assessed how Turkish nation perceive Turkey in the Middle East. The online survey was distributed among Turkish population. The sample size was random. The participants were given multiple choice answers. The author focused on several context and how Turkey is perceived.

- Domestic problems in Turkey
- Regional problems of Middle East
- Opinion of neighboring countries
- What impact Turkey possess in the Middle East
- Position of Turkey in the Middle East

There were 207 people who participated in the online survey.

4.3.1 Most problematic issue in the Middle East

Figure 2: Problematic issue in the Middle East

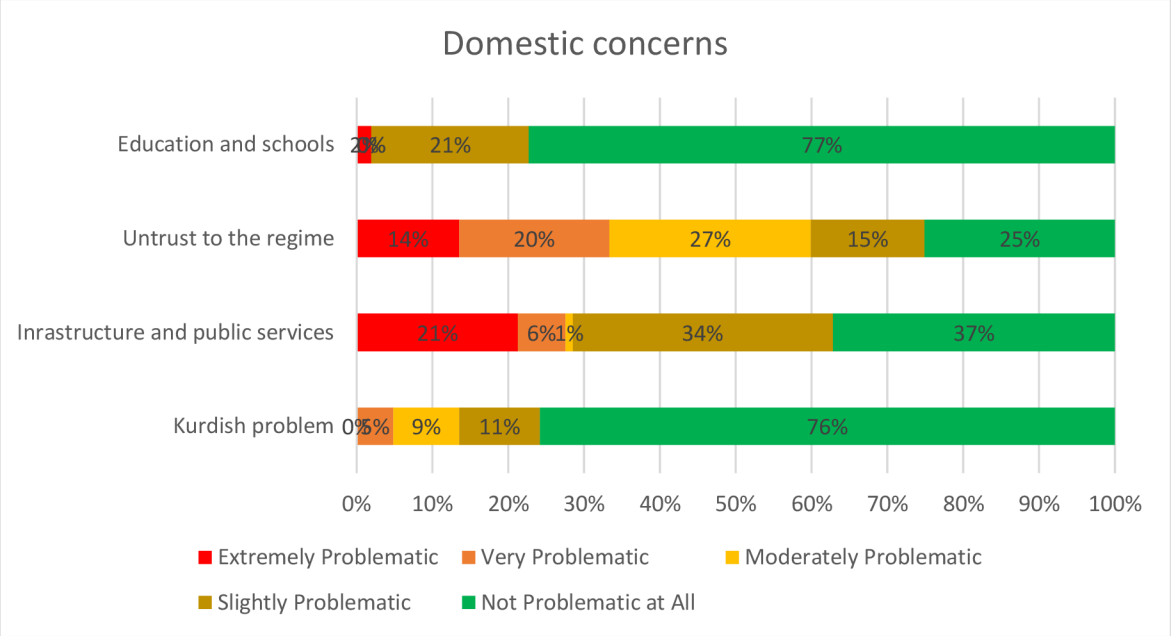


Source: Own.

- 39 % of participants think that Middle East has political issues, 25 % think it is moderately problematic and the rest of 36 % think that it lacks political issues or has slight problems.
- 85 % of participants believe that Middle East has a lot of problems with economy and 15 % think it is moderately problematic.
- 94 % of participants think that the Israel Palestinian conflict is the most problematic.
- 91 % of participants believe that Middle East has a "Lack of peace".

4.3.2 Regional Problems

Figure 3: Domestic concerns of Turkey



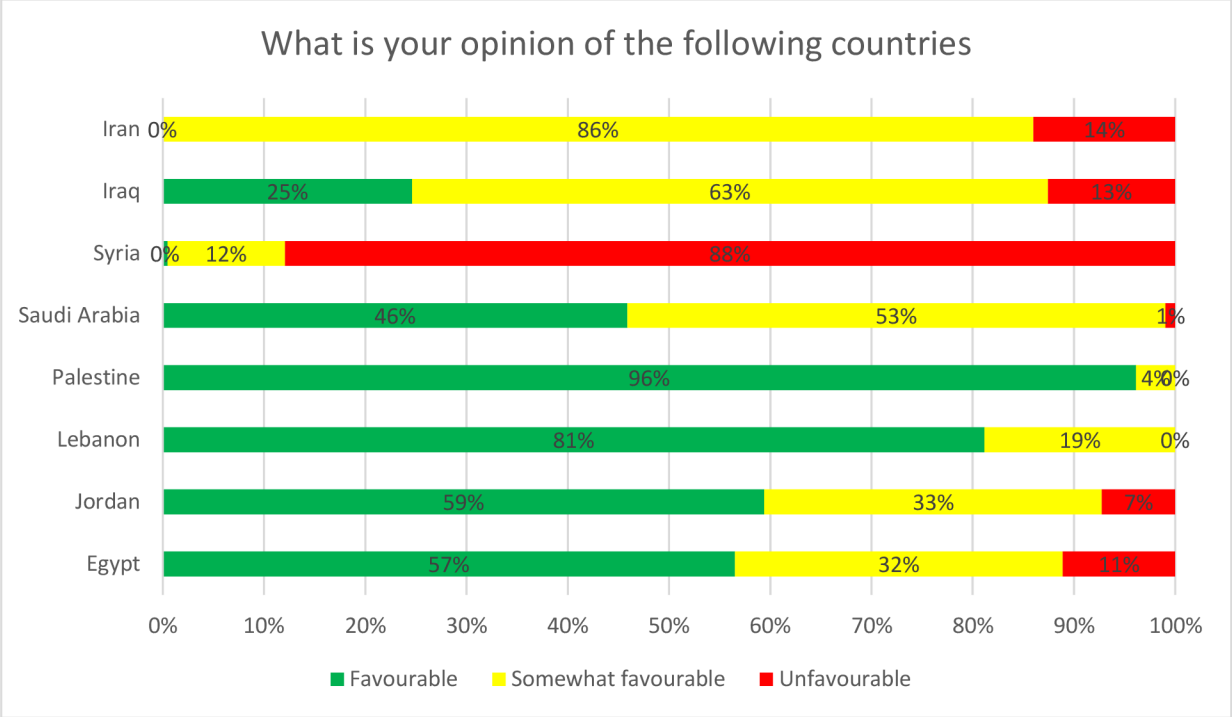
Source: Own.

- 77 % of participants think that Education and Schools don't have problems, 21 % think that it has slight problems and 2 % think it has extreme problems.
- 25 % of participants think that there is an untrust to the governing regime, 15 % think it is slightly problematic, 27 % think it is moderately problematic, 20 % participants think it is very problematic and 14 % think it is extremely problematic.
- 37 % participants think that "Infrastructure and public services" are not problematic at all, 34 % of participants think that it has slight problems, 6 % think it is very problematic and 21 % of participants think it is extremely problematic.

- 76 % participants think that Kurdish problem isn't problematic at all, 11 % participants think it is slightly problematic and 9 % think it is moderately problematic.

4.3.3 Opinions of the Middle East countries in relation to Turkey

Figure 4: Opinion of Turkish population about the countries

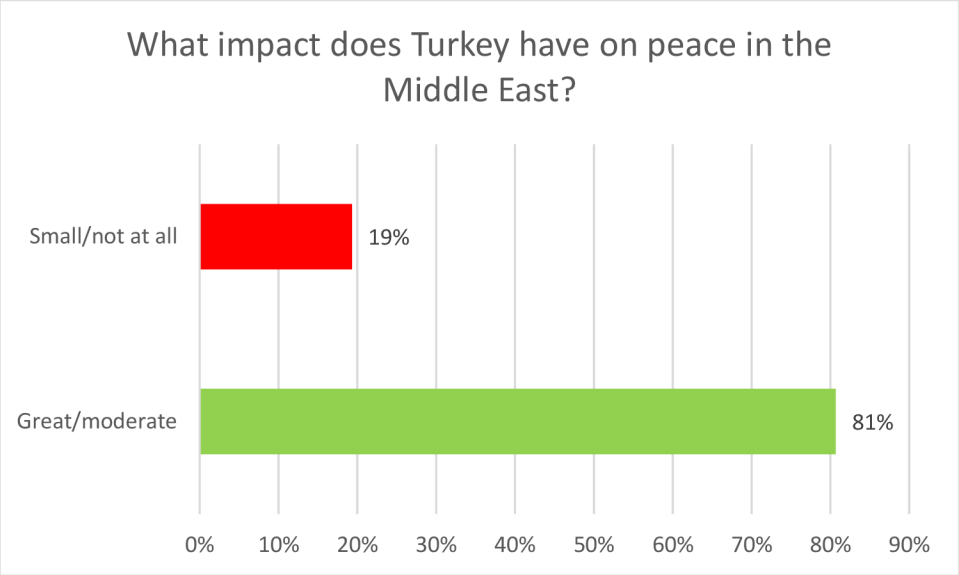


Source: Own

- Iran is perceived as somewhat favorable with the Turkey by 86 %, and 14 % think it is unfavorable
- Iraq is perceived as favorable by 25 % participants, 63 % of people think it is somewhat favorable and 13 % of participants believe it is unfavorable.
- Syria is mostly perceived as unfavorable state that Turkey has ties with (68 %) the rest of the participants think (33 %) that it is somewhat favorable/favorable.
- Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Lebanon are perceived as favorable countries by most participants.
- Jordan and Egypt are almost equally perceived as favorable countries.

4.3.4 Impact of Turkey in keeping peace in the Middle East

Figure 5: Turkey's impact on keeping peace in the ME

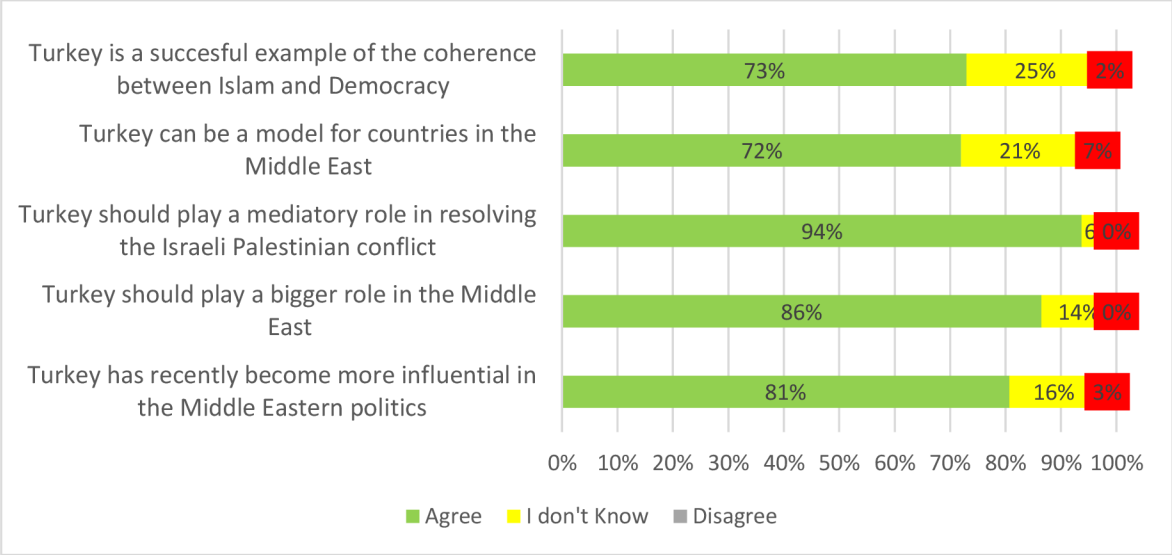


Source: Own.

- 81 % of participants think that Turkey has a great influence in keeping peace in the Middle East, 19 % of participants think it is relatively small.

4.3.5 Turkey and its role in the Middle East

Figure 6: Turkey role in the Middle East and its model



Source: Own.

- Most of the participants (73 %) think that Turkey is a perfect example of Ismamic state and democracy.
- 72 % of participants think that Turkey is a perfect model in the Middle East and could be led by example.
- 94 % of participants believe that Turkey should play a mediatory role in solving the Israel and Palestinian conflict.
- 86 % of participants believe that Turkey should play a much bigger role in the Middle East.
- 81 % of participants believe that Turkish political background is influential in the Middle East.

4.3.6 Summary of a survey

The survey analysis conducted in this master's thesis offers valuable insights into the perceptions and opinions of the Turkish population regarding various aspects related to the Middle East. Key findings indicate that 39% of participants perceive the Middle East as having political issues, with 25% considering these issues moderately problematic, while 36% believe the region lacks political issues or has only slight problems. In terms of economic challenges, a significant 85% of participants believe the Middle East faces substantial economic problems, while 15% find these problems moderately problematic.

Notably, 94% identify the Israel-Palestinian conflict as the most problematic issue in the Middle East, reflecting a consensus among participants.

Furthermore, a prevailing sentiment of 91% suggests a perceived "lack of peace" in the Middle East. The analysis extends to regional issues within Turkey, where 77% believe that Education and Schools do not have problems, 76% do not find the Kurdish problem problematic, and opinions vary on issues like trust in the governing regime and infrastructure/public services.

Regarding Middle East countries, Iran is predominantly perceived as favorable by 86% of participants, whereas Syria is mostly seen as unfavorable by 68%. Other countries like Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Lebanon generally receive favorable perceptions, while Jordan and Egypt are perceived almost equally favorably.

Participants overwhelmingly believe in Turkey's impact on peace in the Middle East, with 81% stating that Turkey has a great influence in maintaining peace, while 19% think it is relatively small. Additionally, Turkey's role in the Middle East is viewed positively, with 73% considering it a perfect example of an Islamic state and democracy, and 72% believing it is a perfect model for the region. Notably, 94% think Turkey should play a mediatory role in resolving the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and 86% believe Turkey should play a much bigger role in the broader Middle East. The majority, 81%, also perceive Turkey's political background as influential in the region.

In summary, these findings collectively provide a nuanced understanding of the Turkish population's perspectives on political, economic, and regional dynamics within both Turkey and the broader Middle East, emphasizing key issues, regional perceptions, and attitudes toward Turkey's role in the region.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Initial goals of AKP

Drawing from the theoretical framework, the author begins by directing attention to the theoretical aspects and provides a summarized conclusion. Emphasis is placed on the significance of meticulously describing the AKP party and its foreign policy, aiming to establish and maintain delicate relationships with Middle Eastern countries without jeopardizing ties. However, in today's complex geopolitical landscape, achieving a perfect balance and fostering positive relations with all nations is nearly impossible. This aligns with the assertion made by Mawad (2015:67), suggesting that when the AKP party assumed leadership, it aspired to shape a new world where Turkey would play a pivotal role in the broader Middle East, leveraging its strategic location between the European Union and Central Asia. Initially, the AKP party's primary objectives were:

- Striking a balance between freedom and security, ensuring and realizing freedom for the Turkish people, and averting potential threats to Turkey's security arising from this equilibrium.
- Rather than focusing predominantly on a single region, Turkey should engage actively in all the regions it identifies with, as this approach would yield greater benefits.
- Implementing proactive peace measures that involve a strategy for addressing challenges before they escalate.
- Achieving the principle of zero issues in Turkey's regional environment, signifying the pursuit of a state of peaceful interactions devoid of disputes.

5.2 Avoiding conflicts

Following the Arab revolutions of 2010–2011, and particularly since 2016, Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East has undergone significant changes, both in terms of its rhetoric and actions. These developments have taken place within the framework of global, regional, and domestic transformations that have mutually strengthened one another. Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East has, to some extent, reverted back to the discourses and practices of the 1990s, which were characterized by a focus on threats, a zero-sum attitude, and skepticism The distinguishing factor is in the underlying philosophy driving these initiatives. This primarily elucidates the distinct array of policies implemented

by the AKP administration. While Turkey's military actions in northern Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean show some similarities to those in the 1990s, its evolving alliances with Arab countries, particularly Qatar and Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, as well as its policies towards Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, demonstrate a new ideological direction. Another component of continuity pertains to Turkey's diplomatic ties with Iran. While the competition between the two countries has primarily focused on Syria, they have managed to successfully separate and avoid direct confrontation on contentious issues by prioritizing cooperation in certain areas where they share common objectives.

Turkey's Middle East strategy now involves a continuous effort to maintain a delicate equilibrium between the United States and Russia, which the AKP government employs to enhance its flexibility and strategic options. During this era, Turkey's regional strategy has shifted its focus away from the EU, making it less important. Instead, Ankara has started to prioritize individual EU member states in its policies towards the Middle East. Within this framework, Turkey's diplomatic relationships with France have worsened due to France's deepening strategic alliance with the UAE. However, Turkey has managed to forge collaborations with Germany in connection to Syria and the refugee crisis, as well as with Italy in the context of Libya. In general, Turkey has emerged as a more proactive participant in the Middle East and has developed a greater degree of skepticism towards regional collaborative initiatives. Generally speaking, the AKP administration has shown a strong inclination to assume intermediary positions in the area. Turkey's government maintains that its historical connections to the area prevent it from remaining apathetic towards all events occurring there.

5.3 Factors that contribute to the Turkish role in the Middle East

Based on the constant re-election of AKP part which was also internally accepted in Turkey, has led to its growing regional importance in the Middle East. However, there are several reasons have contributed to this. Among these factors, the most important ones are;

- Given the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) Islamic background, it has been able to allay Arab concerns about Turkey's radically secular past.
- Arabs accepted the position of the Turks was because they felt helpless and powerless.

- The Arab nations in the Middle East are concerned about Iran's increasing regional influence, particularly in Iraq, Lebanon via Hezbollah, and Palestine via forces like Hamas, which is part of the Islamic Resistance Movement. These nations want to enhance their ties with Turkey and acknowledge its position in the area as a counterforce to limit Iran's influence.
- The Turkish attitude is characterized by moderation and neutrality towards anyone involved in inter-Arab or Western Arab disputes. The underlying principle of this approach is that establishing a connection with one side in a conflict does not imply enmity towards the other party in the same conflict (Ġnaç, 2016:79-81). Turkey has successfully cultivated strong diplomatic ties with several parties, including Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas in Palestine, the Palestinians and "Israelis", Iran and the West, as well as Syria and "Israel".
- The Turkish experiment has been widely regarded as an effective example that Arab nations should replicate. This model is built upon three fundamental principles: democracy, secularism, and Islam.

5.4 Economical relations of Turkey with Middle East countries

As a result of the socioeconomic advantages that Turkey's rise has brought about, the region's economies are becoming more interested in Turkey. In order to foster economic and social relations, Turkey has successfully entered into free trade agreements with a number of nations, including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, and others. As a consequence, there has been a significant increase in the amount of commerce and contacts that occurred between the two countries. Individuals from countries such as Libya, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon are now able to travel between these countries without the need for a visa since reciprocal visa exemptions have been created via negotiated agreements with these countries. The implementation of these accords has made it possible for the countries concerned to move freely among themselves, which has resulted in a rise in the amount of cultural, economic, tourism-related, political, and social interactions.

Based on the recent shifts that have taken place in the dynamics of these countries' ties with Turkey, it seems like there is no sign that the situation will become less tense in the near future. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have both voiced strong objections to

Turkey's military operations in northern Syria, which began operations in October of 2019. Concerns were voiced by Anwar Ghargash, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, over Turkey's military aggressiveness. He said that Turkey's actions represented a danger to the independence of all Arab nations. During the annual meeting of the Arab League that took place not long after the operation, this opinion was expressed by both parties.

Turkey has become as a Hub Engine for Economic development in the Middle East.

The region's economies have shown an increasing interest in Turkey as a result of the socioeconomic advantages that Turkish prosperity has brought about. Free trade agreements have been negotiated with Turkey by a number of countries, including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, and others. These agreements have resulted in an increase in the number of commercial and social interactions on all levels. A number of nations, including Libya, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, have participated in the signing of accords that have resulted in the reciprocal waiver of visa requirements for citizens of such countries. These types of agreements have made it possible for individuals to freely travel between the nations that have signed them, which has resulted in an increase in the number of cultural, commercial, tourism-related, political, and social interactions.

Turkey has become more aware of its influence in the Middle East region.

6. Conclusion

This master's thesis provides a thorough examination of Turkey's foreign policy, with a specific focus on its interactions in the Middle East. Through an in-depth analysis of theoretical principles, such as the Strategic Depth Theory and the New Ottoman Theory, and an exploration of the AKP party's evolving focus from 2002 to 2022, the study highlights the dynamic nature of Turkish governance.

The Middle East is scrutinized not only as a political term but also in terms of security issues, offering a comprehensive understanding of Turkey's responses to significant events like the Arab Spring. The examination of Turkey's diplomatic relations with various Middle Eastern countries post-Arab Spring reveals the intricacies of its foreign policy in the region.

The analytical section delves into economic aspects, examining bilateral trade, foreign investment, and business relations. A specific focus on real estate acquisition in Turkey by other countries adds a nuanced perspective to the economic dimensions of Turkey's foreign policy.

Moreover, the survey analysis provides valuable insights into the perceptions and opinions of Middle East countries regarding Turkey. The identification of the most problematic issues, analysis of regional problems, and evaluation of Turkey's impact on maintaining peace in the Middle East contribute to a nuanced understanding of the geopolitical landscape.

In conclusion, this master's thesis offers a comprehensive and insightful exploration of Turkey's foreign policy, providing a holistic perspective that encompasses theoretical frameworks, historical developments, and contemporary diplomatic and economic considerations in the Middle East.

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8. List of pictures, tables, graphs and abbreviations

8.1 List of tables

8.2 List of figures